

SB0001

Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

Testimony before Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, January 20, 2026

Position: Favorable with amendment

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Committee, my name is Henry Barru and I live in SD 12 in Glen Burnie. I write today to provide testimony in support of SB0001, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings. I thank Senator Augustine for his leadership in sponsoring this important bill.

My interest in this legislation is simple: I do not want the fear, chaos and death that have attended ICE/CBP operations in Minneapolis and elsewhere to be repeated here in Maryland.

The risk of this happening is real and imminent. We have already had an ICE-involved shooting in Glen Burnie on December 24, 2025, and the agency has offered accounts of the incident that do not square with the facts. ICE and CBP nationwide are operating without transparency or accountability, and the administration's leadership is not reining them in. To the contrary, leadership seems to be encouraging a culture of secrecy and impunity. This (predictably) is leading to tragic and deadly results. It's up to us to provide restraint.

Law enforcement officers do not wear masks. Masks are worn by criminals, or secret police and paramilitary organizations that are involved in grossly criminal behavior. Masks promote secrecy and undermine accountability. They also make it easier for bad actors to impersonate law enforcement, which increases risk for law officers and the public alike.

My suggested amendment relates to Section 4B (page 4 line 10) which exempts LE officers "actively engaged in an undercover operation". This section should be removed entirely. It will create a gigantic loophole whereby ICE and CBP will simply call any or all of their operations "undercover" to give themselves permission to wear masks. Further, it's difficult to envision an undercover operation where masks are actually needed.

To put it bluntly, we have seen these agencies willing to say whatever advances their agenda, truth be damned. They have lost their presumption of good faith. Our legislation should reflect that unpleasant fact.

This legislation alone will not restore transparency and accountability to ICE and CBP. But it is an important step in the right direction. **I respectfully urge a favorable committee report, with the above amendment.**

Henry Barru

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