

**Testimony Favorable to SB0001:
Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings**

January 20, 2026

Senator William C. Smith, Jr. Chair, Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice-Chair, and esteemed members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

My name is Ezra Towne, and my pronouns are they/them. I am writing you today because I am appalled by the recent trend of police officers, and ICE agents in particular, wearing face coverings. **I fully support SB0001 - and ask for a favorable report.**

First, facial coverings impede due process. It can be difficult to jot down a badge number or snap a photo while interacting with law enforcement - but most people can remember faces. A lack of facial covering means that those detained by law enforcement, and witnesses to the arrest, can provide enough information for a sketch, or identify an officer from a photo.

Second, facial coverings are also meant to intimidate people when interacting with law enforcement, including federal ICE officers. It makes mistaking a law enforcement interaction as an attack by a criminal hiding their face all too easy. It invokes fear in unnecessary and cruel ways. If law enforcement officers are doing their jobs according to procedure there is no reason to hide their identity.

Lastly, the bill clearly establishes that the ban on facial coverings applies to more than just local law enforcement, but federal agents as well. SB0001 ensures that any ICE activity that includes facial coverings is against the law in Maryland and punishable via a fine of \$2,000, imprisonment not exceeding 2 years, or both.

I respectfully ask for a favorable report on SB0001 from the Judicial Proceedings Committee.

Sincerely,
Mx. Ezra Towne
District 18, Wheaton