

January 20, 2026

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**Testimony in Support of SB 01- Favorable
Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings**

TO: Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Carol Stern

I am testifying in favor of SB01 as a resident of Montgomery County's District 16 and a member of Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation in Bethesda.

My sacred text and tradition teach us to welcome the stranger, for we were strangers in the land of Egypt. Leviticus 19:34 explicitly instructs us to treat immigrants in our land the same as native citizens. Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan wrote "teach us to respect the integrity of every human soul be it that of a friend or stranger, child or adult." When we are working to reform our immigration justice system, we must demand that it operates in accordance with these deeply held Jewish beliefs.

Unmasking ICE agents is crucial for public safety and community trust. Masked agents can create fear, erode trust, and blur lines with criminals, leading to impersonations and crimes. Hiding identities makes it impossible to report misconduct or hold officers accountable. Masked agents terrorize immigrant communities and even native-born citizens, chilling community engagement.

All Marylanders, regardless of immigration status, are entitled to equal protection under the law and deserve to be treated with human dignity. In the face of unprecedented attacks, our immigrant communities in Maryland along with CASA and other non-profits are doing everything they can to protect families and to advocate for their communities. Maryland has the power to stop enabling Trump's ICE agents and be a firewall against authoritarianism. This moment calls for action on the part of the State Legislature. To preserve public safety and public trust for all Marylanders, please pass SB01.

I respectfully urge a favorable report for SB01.