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Date: January 19, 2026

Re: SB 01

Position: FAVORABLE

STATEMENT OF
MAJOR STANFORD “NEILL” FRANKLIN,ⁱ
Maryland State Police (Ret.)
ON BEHALF OF THE
LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTION PARTNERSHIPⁱⁱ

SUBMITTED TO
THE MARYLAND SENATE
JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS
HON. WILLIAM C. SMITH, JR., CHAIR
HON. JEFF WALDSTREICHER, VICE CHAIR

Testimony – Favorable
SB 01 – Public Safety –
Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, Distinguished Representatives, on behalf of the Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP), we support Senate Bill 1 and urge you to give it a favorable report because it will:

- Ensure a basic level of transparency by law enforcement;
- Establish a fundamental foundation for building and maintaining community trust;
- Enable the public to confidently hold members of law enforcement accountable for their actions;
- Establish statewide consistency in how law enforcement officers interact with members of the public; and
- Serve as a direct enhancement to the Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021, which requires de-escalation when feasible, enhancing community and law enforcement safety.

LEAP greatly appreciates the courageous leadership in introducing this bill that benefit not just the public, but members of the law enforcement community. Many people may not initially understand the benefit to members of law enforcement, but when members of the public immediately recognize and feel a comfortable level of transparency and trust, the process of de-escalation is quickly established. And so goes the saying, “cooler heads prevail,” creating a safer environment for all.

I am a law enforcement professional with over 30 years of leadership and training experience with the Maryland State Police, Baltimore City Police Department, and one other agency. I have served as Executive Director of the Law Enforcement Action Partnership and presently provide law enforcement training through Powers Consulting. My testimony reflects extensive operational, training, and public policy experience.

The Law Enforcement Action Partnership strongly supports Maryland Senate Bill 1, which prohibits law enforcement officers from wearing face coverings (masking) during the normal performance of their duties, except in narrowly defined circumstances such as undercover or health-related needs. This bill is essential to uphold transparency—the foundation of community trust and accountability in policing.

Key Arguments for Support

1. Transparency as a Foundational Principle of Policing

Transparency is critical for building and maintaining public trust, legitimacy, and accountability in law enforcement. Police officers are trained and required to identify themselves visibly and audibly during enforcement interactions.

The Baltimore City Police Department’s policy on Field Interviews and Investigative Stops explicitly requires officers to identify themselves during investigative stops, stating clearly under "Required Actions – Investigative Stops" (page 7) that officers must make their identity known to members of the public to foster transparency and trust (Baltimore City Police Department Policy 1112, Field Interviews and Investigative Stops, p.7).ⁱⁱⁱ

Similarly, the Maryland State Police Traffic Stop Procedures codify this principle in Section D, "Trooper and Violator Contact," where troopers are instructed to approach violators and state their rank, name, and department at the beginning of the stop, along with the reason for the stop. This mandated officer identification exemplifies transparency during routine traffic enforcement encounters (Maryland State Police, Operations Directive OPS 03.02, Traffic Stop Procedures, Section D, p.2).^{iv}

These policies reflect core policing values that Maryland Senate Bill 1 protects by prohibiting face coverings that obscure an officer’s face and impede the community’s ability to verify officer identity or legitimacy during normal public interactions.

2. No Tactical Benefit to Masking During Routine Duties

In my experience commanding and training law enforcement officers, face coverings are justified only in specific circumstances such as protection from chemical agents, hazardous environments, medical necessity,

or covert operations. Masking during routine patrol or enforcement lacks tactical merit and diminishes transparency, accountability, and public confidence.

It is my professional opinion that random masking has no measurable benefit to law enforcement officers, and that masking is done under the belief that masking will protect officers from the harms of doxing. There is no concrete evidence that masking protects ethically behaving law enforcement officers more than those who do not wear face coverings, including other public officials, such as judges and prosecutors.

3. Risks of Masking and Impersonation

Masking creates public confusion and fear, especially given recent incidents of impersonators unlawfully detaining citizens. By requiring visible identification and restricting masking, Senate Bill 1 mitigates this risk and enhances public safety.

4. Accountability and Ethical Policing

Visible identification is a key safeguard against misconduct and abuse of authority. Senate Bill 1 reinforces this accountability by endorsing policies that ensure officers cannot anonymously carry out public enforcement.

5. Alignment with Best Practices and Maryland Law

By mandating model policies through the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission, Senate Bill 1 harmonizes Maryland law with national best practices emphasizing officer transparency, accountability, and public trust. It will also serve as a direct enhancement to the Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021, which requires de-escalation when feasible (Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021, p.10, lines 23-26).^v

In closing, federal law, 10 USC 723: Support of Federal Authorities in Response to Civil Disturbances,^{vi} requires federal agents to properly identify themselves by visible displaying their names in conjunction with their agency name. Senate Bill 1 simply takes law enforcement identification one step further along the necessary path of government transparency, and no one should be more transparent than government agents who have the power to revoke the people's fundamental right of freedom.

Senate Bill 1 is a crucial measure to guarantee that law enforcement officers engage openly and transparently with the public, fostering trust and ensuring ethical and constitutional policing. I urge this committee and the Maryland Senate to support this important legislation.

I will make myself available to offer additional expert testimony and training regarding the implementation of these principles throughout Maryland law enforcement.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Neill Franklin".

Major Stanford "Neill" Franklin (Ret.)

ⁱ Major Neill Franklin (Ret.) is a distinguished figure in law enforcement, boasting a remarkable 34-year career that includes notable positions within both the Maryland State Police and the Baltimore Police Department. Franklin's extensive service began with the Maryland State Police, where he dedicated 23 years of his life to public safety. His exceptional performance led him to be selected in 2000 by the Commissioner of the Baltimore Police Department to reconstruct and lead the Education and Training Section in Baltimore.

Throughout his tenure with the Maryland State Police, Franklin made significant contributions, notably serving as the commander of the Education and Training Division and the Bureau of Drug and Criminal Enforcement. He was instrumental in the creation and oversight of the first Domestic Violence Investigative Units for the Maryland State Police, showcasing his commitment to progressive policing practices.

Franklin's perspective on the War on Drugs was profoundly shaped by the community impacts he witnessed during his career. Influenced by former Baltimore Mayor Kurt Schmoke, who famously criticized the drug war's violent repercussions, Franklin became a staunch advocate for reform. This commitment was further fueled by the heartbreaking loss of his close friend, Maryland State Police Corporal Ed Toatley, who was killed during an undercover drug operation. This tragedy solidified his resolve to challenge and change ineffective policing and drug policies.

In 2010, Franklin transitioned from active duty to leadership as the Executive Director of the Law Enforcement Action Partnership, a role he held for a decade until his retirement in 2020. Under his guidance, the organization worked towards reshaping public safety strategies and advocating for reformative public policy solutions.

Franklin's expertise in policing has also been recognized in judicial settings, where he has served as an expert witness in both Maryland Circuit and federal district courts. His commitment to community engagement and reform extends beyond his professional duties; he has held positions on various boards, including the Youth & Police Initiative, the Alliance for Safety and Justice, the National Organization of Retired State Troopers, the Faith Based Community Council on Law Enforcement and Intelligence, and TurnAround Inc. among others.

Through his extensive service and advocacy, Major Neill Franklin has made a lasting impact on law enforcement practices and community safety initiatives, demonstrating a profound commitment to justice and reform.

ⁱⁱ The Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEA) is a nonprofit group of police, prosecutors, judges, and other criminal justice professionals who speak from firsthand experience. Our mission is to make communities safer by focusing law enforcement resources on the greatest threats to public safety and working toward healing police-community relations.

ⁱⁱⁱ Baltimore City Police Department Policy 1112, Field Interviews and Investigative Stops, p.7.

24. At the commencement of all Investigative Stops, including Vehicle Stops, absent exigent circumstances, members shall: 24.1. Introduce themselves, be professional and courteous, and exercise Procedural Justice principles. (See Policy 325, Procedural Justice in Interactions). 24.2. Provide notification of the BWC recording; 24.3. Display proper identification to the Stopped individual; and 24.4. Provide the following information to the Stopped individual: 24.4.1. The member's name; 24.4.2. The member's badge number; 24.4.3. That the member is a member of the Baltimore Police Department; and 24.4.4. The reason for the Vehicle or other Stop.

^{iv} Maryland State Police, Operations Directive OPS 03.02, Traffic Stop Procedures, p.2.

D. Trooper and Violator Contact 1. Officer safety should be the determining factor on the type of approach employed. 2. The driver and any passengers may be ordered out of the car for the trooper's safety. 3. The trooper will approach the violator and: a. state his rank, name and department; b. provide the reason for the stop; c. if applicable, notify the violator the stop is being audibly and visually recorded; and d. request the appropriate documentation (driver's license, registration).

^v Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021, p.10, lines 23-26.

3-524, (E) A police Officer Shall: (1) When time, circumstances and safety allow, take steps to gain compliance and de-escalate conflict without using physical force.

^{vi} §723. Support of Federal authorities in response to civil disturbances: requirement for use of members of the Armed Forces and Federal law enforcement personnel.

(a) Requirement.-Whenever a member of the armed forces (including the National Guard) or Federal law enforcement personnel provide support to Federal authorities to respond to a civil disturbance, each individual employed in the capacity of providing such support shall visibly display- (1) the individual's name or other individual identifier that is unique to that individual; and (2) the name of the armed force, Federal entity, or other organization by which such individual is employed. (b) Exception. -The requirement under subsection (a) shall not apply to individuals referred to in such subsection who- (1) do not wear a uniform or other distinguishing clothing or equipment in the regular performance of their official duties; or (2) are engaged in undercover operations in the regular performance of their official duties.