

January 22, 2026
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TESTIMONY ON SB0001 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: David M. Friedman

My name is David Friedman. I am a resident of Colesville/Cloverly in District 14. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB0001, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.

I am an active member of Oseh Shalom, a Jewish Reconstructionist congregation located in Laurel, MD. Many traditional Jewish perspectives view wearing masks as a moral obligation, fulfilling a mandate to protect life (Deuteronomy 30:19). While more recently used to support mask wearing during the most recent pandemic, modern use of mask wearing, especially by law enforcement officers, has been associated by some Jewish authorities with supporting a culture of anonymity that allows for the spread of hate, antisemitism, and a lack of transparency and accountability. On balance, I feel obligated to support prohibiting law enforcement officers in Maryland from wearing face coverings, allowing for reasonable exemptions such as being involved in an undercover assignment, medical reasons, and the need for protection during a SWAT operation.

Over the past year, I have been distressed to see how President Trump is not only focused on mass deportations but deploying Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and other Federal agencies to terrorize immigrants and entire communities of color. As part of this brutal strategy, the wearing of masks by ICE agents and other law enforcement officers has helped instill an unparalleled fear in many communities throughout the country including in Maryland. This intentional fear is damaging to law enforcement as it seriously undermines public trust and damages the accountability that Maryland leaders have strived to assure in recent years. It is especially antithetical to community policing that requires trust to build collaborative partnerships to assure public safety.

I support the approach outlined in SB0001 as it provides clear guidance for model development by the Maryland Police Standards and Training Commission and allows for reasonable exceptions via its clear definition of "face coverings". **I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB0001.**