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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 0001, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers -
Prohibition on Face Coverings

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TO: Chair William Smith & Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee, my name is Chris Apple, I live in Columbia, Maryland, and I am writing to support SB 0001, Prohibition on Face Coverings.

This country has a long and bloody history of masked vigilantes claiming to enforce the law. From Slave Patrols to Red Shirts to the Ku Klux Klan, many people have acted out their worst racist impulses while wearing a mask and a badge of office. Wearing a mask is an excuse to do violence to the community, while escaping the consequences of that violence. Masked officers are not heroes and they do not serve the people. If someone truly wishes to serve the people, he can do so with his face in the clear, open to judgement and the review of the community he polices. One only wears a mask if he is ashamed of his actions.

Recent events in Minneapolis have shown us that we have plenty to fear from masked law enforcement officers. They commit misconduct, violence, and even murder – and face no consequences for their actions. Maryland should not suffer the violent actions of masked vigilantes, even if they wear a badge of office. All law enforcement officers should be fully unmasked and accountable for their actions. That is why SB 0001 is so important - to hold law enforcement accountable, so that Maryland does not suffer the same injustices that Minnesota is currently suffering.

History shows us there is only one true way forward: if you wish to enforce the law in Maryland, you can do so without obscuring your face. To do anything else is to shirk your responsibility as a law enforcement officer.

I urge you to support SB 0001 and help ensure that Maryland's law enforcement is being held to the highest standards of conduct.