

Dear Honorable Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Philip Ateto and I am a lifelong Marylander, currently residing in Annapolis, in Anne Arundel County. I am writing in support of SB0001 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

It is important to me that ICE and all law enforcement in the state are required to show their faces as it is a crucial part of accountability and trust with law enforcement in our communities. How are residents and lawmakers supposed to hold law enforcement accountable for violations of people's rights and policies using photos and videos if their face is not visible, in addition to clear markings that identify their agency and badge number?

It is important for public safety that ICE officers can be identified. Without visible identification and uniform standards, fear and public distrust in law enforcement increases. Furthermore, community members are more likely to intervene if they watch someone being attacked or kidnapped by a masked, unmarked group. There's no way to know if someone is simply impersonating an ICE officer which as been happening already, resulting in armed robberies, rapes, and sexual assaults that go unreported and further erode community trust in law enforcement.

Our county sheriff values transparency and the community has benefited from this. We should not be allowing armed individuals with masks to intimidate and frighten communities with impunity.

I urge you to vote in favor of SB0001 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings for transparency and safety.

Thank you for your time and consideration.