

SB0001/HB0155: Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings: Please VOTE AGAINST this bill.

Dear Judicial Proceedings Committee and Judiciary Committee:

I respectfully request that you vote to **oppose SB0001/HB0155 – Public Safety: Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings.**

While transparency and accountability in law enforcement are critically important, this bill would have the unintended consequence of **compromising officer safety and undermining effective policing**. In many circumstances, face coverings are essential tools that protect officers from physical harm, retaliation, and long-term health risks.

Law enforcement officers often wear face coverings during crowd-control situations, protests, tactical operations, undercover assignments, or when responding to credible threats. Requiring officers to expose their identities in volatile or hostile environments increases the risk of **targeted retaliation against officers and their families**, both during and after an incident. This risk is not hypothetical and has been documented nationwide. Officers **must** be able to protect their identities to preserve operational integrity and prevent criminal actors from identifying, intimidating, or retaliating against them.

From a **public safety standpoint**, courts have consistently recognized that the government has a compelling interest in protecting the safety of law enforcement personnel. Policies that unnecessarily heighten risk may **expose the state to liability** if officers are harmed as a foreseeable result of mandated exposure.

Additionally, face coverings may be necessary for **health and safety reasons**, including protection from airborne hazards, chemical agents, smoke, infectious diseases, or environmental debris. A blanket prohibition fails to account for these realities and limits officers' ability to adapt to dangerous or unpredictable conditions.

Accountability should be achieved through **constitutionally sound**, proven measures such as body-worn cameras, clear identification numbers, internal oversight, and civilian review mechanisms—not by exposing officers to unnecessary danger. These tools promote transparency without exposing officers to heightened danger or restricting operational discretion in the field.

SB0001/HB0155 prioritizes a one-size-fits-all mandate over nuanced, lawful public safety practices and risks unintended legal and safety consequences. It also risks discouraging qualified individuals from entering or remaining in law enforcement at a time when recruitment and retention are already significant challenges.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to **vote against SB0001/HB0155**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Trudy Tibbals