

**Testimony on Senate Bill – Favorable**  
**SB0001 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face**  
**Coverings**

**Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**January 22, 2026**

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

My name is Valerie Hodge-Williams, and I am a resident of Garrett County, Maryland. I am writing in support of SB0001 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

Every day, our local Sheriff's officers wear identifying uniforms and bodycams to serve and protect our community. They know that transparency, accountability, and community trust are essential in their work. If ICE officers are masked and indistinguishable from vigilantes, we are all less safe. Individuals are more likely to refuse to comply, escalating situations unnecessarily. Onlookers are more likely 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. Furthermore, there's increased risk of "blue-on-blue" incidents, when a officer accidentally shooting another officer, with unidentifiable agents.

In other communities, there's been more vigilantes and dangerous impersonations since masked ICE raids escalated (as reported by the Nonpartisan Center for American Progress <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/masked-and-unidentifiable-the-risks-of-federal-law-enforcement-operating-without-identification/>).

Unmasking improves public safety for residents as well as local officers.

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.