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The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Testimony of Trans Maryland

IN SUPPORT OF

Senate Bill #1: Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

To the Chair, Vice Chair, and esteemed members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

Trans Maryland is a multi-racial, multi-gender, trans-led community power building organization dedicated to Maryland's trans community. Because Trans Maryland believes in protecting the civil rights of all Marylanders in the face of ongoing radicalization by federal law enforcement agencies and their allies, we strongly support Senate Bill 1, which will go far to ensuring that law enforcement authorities cannot hide behind a mask or other obscuring face covering to evade responsibility for their illegal actions.

Until the past year, federal, state, and local law enforcement officers rarely (if ever) wore facial coverings for the purpose of hiding their identities. This has changed under the second Trump Administration, with US Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE") leading the way on a new disturbing practice whereby officers cover most or all of their faces—a practice that is often done in tandem with the removal of identifying insignia from the officers' uniforms. Together, these practices make the public less safe and make it harder, if not impossible, to identify officers who violate the rights of those they are supposed to protect.

Law enforcement officers, including ICE agents, were able to do their jobs without the use of masks before 2025. They do not need masks now. While Maryland's ability to alter federal practices more broadly is limited, the state can at least stand up to say that officers cannot wear masks to hide their identities within the state's borders. For these reasons, Trans Maryland **strongly urges a favorable report of Senate Bill 1.**