

Testimony on SB1 – Position: Favorable
Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings Date of
Hearing: January 22, 2026

To: Honorable Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Cindy Brach, Silver Spring, MD 20910

Below you will find my favorable testimony in support of SB1- Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

My name is Cindy Brach and I live in District 20. I am proud to live in a diverse Maryland community. ICE masked agents are terrorizing, detaining, and incarcerating Maryland residents randomly. We cannot stop their unlawful behavior, but at least we should try to require that they show themselves.

This bill is important because the anonymity that a mask confers enables brutality. It means that ICE agents will think there will be no consequences for their actions. Unmasking them may inhibit behavior, as they know that their friends and family members could see what they are doing to unarmed Maryland residents.

I have seen a video of a masked ICE agent being challenged to remove his mask, “Show yourself! Why won’t you take off your mask” The ICE agent replied, “I have a family,” indicating that he would be embarrassed if his family could see what he was doing.

This is not just happening in Minneapolis, Chicago, and Portland. Not long ago an ICE agent was apprehending a man in the middle of a Hyattsville intersection, a few blocks from where I have choir practice. The ICE agent in charge was not masked and many people were filming on their phones. The ICE agents were having difficulty handcuffing their target, who was pinned to the ground facedown. There is strong reason to believe that had the ICE agent been wearing a mask he would not have been restrained and waited for re-enforcements to arrive to get the man he was struggling into the ICE van. It is likely that instead he would have used excessive force to incapacitate the man who was resisting being dragged away.

If someone in a mask came to take you away, someone who does not show a judicial warrant, who drives an unmarked car, would you go with them trustingly or would you run from them? As a Jew, I find ICE’s actions alarmingly reminiscent to Jews being rounded up, deported, and put into labor and concentration camps. This bill is a small action that speaks volumes about Maryland’s values of transparency, accountability, and public trust.

I strongly urge all members of the Judiciary Committee to provide a favorable report on SB1.