



# Maryland Chiefs of Police Association

## Maryland Sheriffs' Association



### MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair and  
Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Darren Popkin, Executive Director, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee  
Andrea Mansfield, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee  
Samira Jackson, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: January 22, 2026

RE: **SB 1 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers Prohibition on Face Coverings**

POSITION: **OPPOSE**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **OPPOSE** SB 1, which requires the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission (MPTSC) to develop and adopt a model policy prohibiting the use of face coverings by any law enforcement officer while performing duties in Maryland. Each law enforcement agency operating in the State is required to adopt a policy consistent with the model policy.

While we appreciate the intent of SB 1, the legislation would restrict officers' ability to use face coverings in circumstances where they are critical for safety, operational integrity, and public health. Many law enforcement roles depend on protecting officer identity during gang, narcotics, or sensitive intelligence investigations. Removing this ability increases the risk that officers or their families become identifiable targets for retaliation or intimidation in the community. Criminal organizations and repeat violent offenders routinely collect information on officers involved in their cases. Restricting identity protection undermines officer safety and impairs the investigative work the public expects.

SB 1 also does not adequately account for the operational and environmental contexts in which face coverings are necessary. Tactical teams, fugitive task forces, and undercover or plainclothes personnel rely on facial protection to preserve the integrity of arrests, surveillance, and sensitive operations. Face coverings are also integrated into protective gear such as helmets, goggles, and respirators used during responses involving chemicals, smoke, airborne debris, or hazardous materials. During disease outbreaks and in close-contact settings with medically vulnerable individuals, face coverings protect both officers and the public. Harsh weather conditions, such as extreme cold or wind, also require facial protection to safely perform outdoor duties. We agree that public trust is essential to policing and we are committed to policies that strengthen transparency and accountability.

We are particularly concerned with the punishment structure in SB 1. A violation would constitute a misdemeanor punishable by up to two years of imprisonment or a \$2,000 fine, require an officer to waive all immunity in any related civil action, and be classified as police misconduct under Maryland law. These penalties are disproportionate and risk creating a chilling effect on reasonable, good-faith decision-making in fast-moving and dangerous situations.

Should the Committee wish to move forward with legislation restricting the use of face coverings, MCPA and MSA strongly suggest the MPTSC establish the policy, the circumstances in which face coverings can and cannot be used, and its applicability. That would avoid the prescriptive nature of the bill and provide an opportunity to develop a workable policy. MCPA and MSA also encourage deleting the penalty provisions in the bill. Officers are already disciplined for violating policies.

For these reasons, MCPA and MSA **OPPOSE SB 1** and urges an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report.