

Testimony on House Bill - **Favorable**

HB0155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings

Judiciary Committee

February 24, 2026

My name is Joyce Sims and I appreciate this opportunity to offer comments in support of **HB0155** prohibiting the current practice by federal immigration agents of masking their identity when stopping and detaining people.

While I understand there may be a need for police to shield their identity when operating undercover, the standard for law enforcement is to be clearly identifiable in order to assure basic public safety. Without visible identification and uniform standards, we have no way to know who is stopping us. Even if they are federal agents, there is no way to hold them accountable for excessive force or other harm done, and so they act with impunity. As we have seen, it's been a recipe for disaster.

In August of 2008, I was driving through Annapolis to work, when I saw a man chasing a woman along the side of the road. She was screaming and crying; he was shouting at her to stop. I slowed as we got closer, stopped my car, opened the passenger door and shouted for her to get in. She did, pulling the door shut as we took off and drove to the city police department. I thought it might have been a domestic incident, but she said she had no idea who he was and that he had a knife. Fortunately, he was apprehended very quickly. I tell you this because my actions would have been very different had he been wearing a police uniform with a badge. I probably would have pulled to a place of safety to observe.

The point is that masked people wearing fatigues and carrying guns inspire fear and reaction from people targeted and those observing. The mask and lack of identification heightens those responses. Lack of accountability rightfully inspires defiance and lack of cooperation from the public.

I urge your vote in **favor of HB0155** to support transparency and safety for the people of Maryland. Thank you.

Joyce Sims
Mechanicsville MD