

February 20, 2026

**Testimony on SB 001**  
**Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings**  
**Judiciary Committee**

**Position: Favorable**

Common Cause Maryland respectfully submits this testimony in support of SB 0001, which would require the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to develop a policy prohibiting certain law enforcement officers from wearing face coverings while performing their official duties in the State of Maryland, except when actively engaged in undercover operations.

Common Cause Maryland is committed to advancing civil rights, government accountability, and democratic integrity. Transparency between the public and those entrusted with governmental authority is a cornerstone of a functioning democracy. When law enforcement officers interact with civilians, clear identification is essential to maintaining public trust, ensuring accountability, and safeguarding constitutional principles.

In recent years, federal immigration enforcement operations have increasingly involved officers wearing masks and plain clothes during public interactions. Over 3,000 Maryland residents were detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement last year, approximately double the number from the prior year. In many cases, agents were not readily identifiable. These practices create fear, confusion, and uncertainty within communities and raise serious concerns about transparency and public safety.

Maryland law requires officers to display proper identification during stops, consistent with Section 2-109. While undercover operations warrant limited exceptions, routine enforcement activities conducted by masked officers undermine the spirit of that requirement. When individuals cannot verify the identity of those exercising state authority, it weakens accountability and increases the risk of impersonation or misconduct. Clear identification protects not only residents, but also legitimate law enforcement officers from impersonation and public mistrust.

For many Marylanders, particularly those from immigrant or minority communities, the prospect of being approached or detained by unidentified, masked agents is deeply alarming. The lack of visible identification erodes community confidence and strains the relationship between residents and government institutions.

Common Cause Maryland respectfully urges a favorable report on SB 0001 as it represents a reasonable and measured step to restore transparency, strengthen accountability, and reaffirm Maryland's commitment to protecting the rights and dignity of its residents.