



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

WILL JAWANDO
COUNCILMEMBER AT-LARGE
CHAIR, EDUCATION & CULTURE COMMITTEE
PLANNING, HOUSING, AND PARKS COMMITTEE

February 20, 2026

Montgomery County Councilmember Will Jawando
Testimony Supporting HB 155
(Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings)

Dear Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to share my strong support for HB 155 (Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings), which was cross-filed with SB 1, and to share with you information regarding a related bill I introduced recently with strong support in the Montgomery County Council. It is my hope that the state will pass this important legislation to help protect our residents in a time of increasing lawlessness from masked federal immigration enforcement agents.

As you know, throughout history, masks have been used in American law enforcement to shield the wearer from accountability, and used for terror, impunity, and anonymity for violence. Unfortunately, we are now watching history repeating itself before our eyes, as federal immigration enforcement terrorizes communities throughout the United States, including in Montgomery County and other parts of Maryland. The actions of ICE we are witnessing are not about enforcing laws or making our communities safer, but about causing fear through violence and intimidation. We must reject these practices, stand up for our residents and the rule of law, and safeguard our communities as much as possible.

In collaboration with colleagues and with significant community support, I was proud to introduce Bill 5-26, the Unmask ICE Act, in Montgomery County.¹ This bill prohibits any law enforcement officer,

¹ For more information about the Unmask ICE Act, please see: https://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/Viewer.php?view_id=169&event_id=16687&meta_id=209248. For your information, I am also co-sponsoring the County Values Act, an important piece of complementary legislation introduced by

federal, state, or local, from wearing a mask while interacting with the public in Montgomery County. The legislation includes commonsense exceptions for medical masks, SWAT operations, and emergency situations.

The introduction of this county legislation demonstrates the urgent local need for the protections outlined in HB 155. We cannot wait for federal action or hope that voluntary compliance will protect our residents. By passing HB 155, Maryland would establish a clear statewide standard that reinforces local efforts like ours and ensures consistent protection across all jurisdictions.

Please note that, at my request, a majority of my colleagues on the County Council voted to support this state level legislation. Our county's strong support for this reform shows there is political will for this change, and I urge you to give HB 155 a favorable report so that Maryland can lead the nation on this critical public safety and accountability issue. In addition to amendments to make the bill consistent with the updated SB 1, I suggest amending the bill to require an earlier effective date, given the urgent need for such legislation.

As our local law enforcement recognizes, safety requires trust and trust requires transparency. Our community is calling on us to do more to protect them in these uncertain and worrisome times, and we must listen, work together, and move forward with courage to protect our communities.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony, and I would be happy to discuss the state or county legislative proposals with you if that would be helpful. You may contact me at councilmember.jawando@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Will Jawando', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Will Jawando

my colleague Councilmember Kristin Mink:

https://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=169&event_id=16687&meta_id=209244