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Committee: House Judiciary Committee
Testimony on: HB 0155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers -
Prohibition on Face Coverings
Organization: Individual
Person Submitting: Philippa Gasnier
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 24, 2026

Dear Chairwoman Bartlett and members of the committee,

I am writing in favor of HB 0155 (Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings), which would ban the use of face coverings by any law enforcement officers and agents operating in Maryland. Law enforcement officers, when operating in our State, are subject to our state laws and our State has a duty to protect the health and welfare of its residents.

For years, Maryland has recognized that trust and accountability are crucial for effective law enforcement. Maryland has engaged in statewide training, local initiatives and legislative efforts (like the TRUST Acts) to build trust, foster collaboration, and solve problems to improve public safety and quality of life in our State. Why would Maryland then condone unidentified, masked officers confronting its citizens? Officers in masks create terror and intimidation in the community. The presence of unidentifiable officers makes policing more challenging and dangerous, as community members or fellow officers may mistake them for a criminal. In many reported cases, criminals have posed as law enforcement to fool and intimidate citizens. In addition, this practice impedes accountability for officers who are engaged in misconduct, and, of course, undermines trust in law enforcement.

I support HB-0155 as a common sense measure, consistent with Maryland's long held understanding that effective and accountable law enforcement requires transparency and identification in the community. The bill rightfully provides for certain exceptions. Other than such exceptions, both Maryland residents and law enforcement operating in Maryland deserve to have the certainty and safety of identifiable, accountable law enforcement. I ask that you vote in favor of HB 0155 for a safer and better Maryland.

Thank you,
Philippa Gasnier