



**NATASHA DARTIGUE**  
PUBLIC DEFENDER

**KEITH LOTRIDGE**  
DEPUTY PUBLIC DEFENDER

**HANNIBAL KEMERER**  
CHIEF OF STAFF

**ELIZABETH HILLIARD**  
DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

## POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

**BILL: SB0001 Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings**

**FROM: Maryland Office of the Public Defender**

**POSITION: Favorable**

**DATE: March 27, 2026**

---

The Maryland Office of the Public Defender respectfully requests that the Committee issue a favorable report on SB1, limiting the use of masks by law enforcement agents operating in Maryland.

Over the last year, the use of full face masks by federal law enforcement officers engaged in immigration enforcement has become widespread, often paired with a highly militarized style of dress and equipment, and an unprecedented disregard for the 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment. The terror and desperation that this style of aggressive, militarized enforcement causes is not conducive to safe and peaceful communities. Masked anonymity for law enforcement agents encourages a sense of impunity, separation, and fear, rather than encouraging accountability, trust, and deescalation. For that reason, masks increase the risks for everyone involved. Prohibiting the use of masks by law enforcement in most circumstances is a common-sense step towards ensuring accountability to the rule of law, and ultimately fostering safer and more humane interactions between law enforcement agents and Maryland residents.

This bill is useful not only in its applicability to federal agents, but also in its applicability to Maryland officers. If Maryland law enforcement agencies wish to continue to build trust across the state in order to do their work effectively, they must distance themselves clearly and decisively from agents engaged in federal immigration enforcement. Prohibiting the use of masks, which have become associated with some of the worst abuses by immigration authorities, is one powerful way to assert that Maryland's law enforcement officers are not faceless outsiders who answer to no one, but rather identifiable human beings, members of the communities that they police, who carry out their duties while remaining accountable to the system and the people that they serve.

For these reasons, the Maryland Office of the Public Defender urges this Committee to issue a favorable report on SB0001.

Submitted by: Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Government Relations Division.

Authored by: Stephanie Wolf, Director of Immigration Services, [stephanie.wolf@maryland.gov](mailto:stephanie.wolf@maryland.gov).