



Maryland Chiefs of Police Association Maryland Sheriffs' Association



MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Sandy Bartlett, Chair and
Members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Darren Popkin, Executive Director, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Andrea Mansfield, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Samira Jackson, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: March 31, 2026

RE: **SB 1 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers Prohibition on Face Coverings**

POSITION: **OPPOSE**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **OPPOSE SB 1**, as amended. We appreciate the amendments to SB 1, particularly the designation of the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to develop a uniform policy, the removal of language requiring an officer to waive immunity in a related civil action, and the reduction of a violation from a misdemeanor to a civil offense, including the elimination of potential imprisonment. These changes are meaningful progress and reflect a more balanced approach to addressing the issue.

However, SB 1 continues to place into statute an issue that is more appropriately addressed through existing departmental policies and professional standards. Law enforcement agencies already maintain and enforce policies governing officer conduct, equipment, and identification, and those policies are best managed at the agency level where operational needs and local conditions can be fully considered.

As amended, the bill maintains a civil penalty for violations tied to policy compliance. MCPA and MSA oppose the creation of a statutory penalty for what is fundamentally an internal policy matter. Officers operate in dynamic and often unpredictable environments, and decisions regarding the use of face coverings may be driven by safety, operational, or environmental considerations. Imposing a civil penalty in these circumstances risks discouraging reasonable, good-faith decision-making. This statutory framework, even with amendments, does not provide the level of flexibility needed to account for these real-world conditions.

Lastly, MCPA and MSA also respectfully request the following additional amendments to further align the bill with operational realities and existing law:

- We recommend striking “absolutely” on page 3, line 3, so that the standard is “necessary,” as the current language sets an unreasonably high threshold that may conflict with occupational safety practices, including OSHA guidance related to cold weather and protective equipment.
- We also recommend clarifying on page 3, line 25 that permissible protective equipment includes “N95 respirators,” as these are distinct from medical or surgical masks and are subject to specific fit-testing requirements under MOSH regulations.
- Finally, on page 5, line 17, we strongly urge replacing “and address” with either “agency name” or “agency work address” to ensure that an officer’s home address is not subject to disclosure, consistent with protections under the Maryland Public Information Act. These amendments would help ensure the bill is workable, protects officer safety, and aligns with existing legal and regulatory frameworks.

MCPA and MSA support transparency and accountability in policing and are committed to policies that build public trust. However, those goals are best achieved through agency-level policy development and enforcement, rather than through statutory mandates and civil penalties.

For these reasons, MCPA and MSA **OPPOSE SB 1**, as amended, and respectfully request an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report.