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Patrick Moran – President

**HB 155 – Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings
Judiciary Committee
February 24, 2026**

FAVORABLE

AFSCME Council 3 supports House Bill 155. Since the beginning of the new federal administration, Americans throughout our country have been stricken with fear, alarm, and confusion by federal law enforcement actions against people in our communities, including our neighbors who are immigrants. Many times, these events have unfolded with no clear identifying information or insignia that the individuals engaged in actions against people in our communities are federal law enforcement officers. Across our country, swift, unconscionable actions by federal agents, including smashing people’s car windows and dragging them from their vehicles, have instilled fear and mistrust in our law enforcement.

AFSCME Council 3 represents approximately 55,000 public service workers at the state, county, and municipal levels of government. AFSCME members are on the frontlines every day across Maryland providing critical public services that make our communities run.

Transparency, accountability, and ensuring law enforcement carries out its operations with integrity cannot take place when law enforcement agents categorically hide their faces behind masks or other face coverings.

House Bill 155 establishes reasonable reforms to begin rebuilding trust between law enforcement and everyday residents in our communities. The bill requires the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to develop a policy that prohibits the use of face coverings by law enforcement in the course of their duties, subject to certain exceptions. The requirements do not apply to law enforcement officers actively engaged in an undercover operation.

AFSCME Council 3 believes these reforms are reasonable, provide flexibility to enable face coverings by law enforcement where appropriate, and will help to build trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 155.