

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable HB155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

Dear Honorable Chair Bartlett, Vice-Chair Davis, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Linda Girdner and I am a resident of Gambrills, MD. I am writing in **support of HB155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings**

My mother grew up in Nazi Germany. She saw Nazi officers kidnap and beat people on the street. As a child, she and her father met one day to say goodbye to a Jewish friend, because the man said he had to report for deportation the next day. He died in Auschwitz. Throughout Germany and later in occupied countries, Nazi officers followed the orders of their Führer. There was no accountability to any fair and just law, no opportunity to be heard for those taken, no recourse until the Nuremberg Trials in 1945. And even those only addressed a minority of the Nazis who had been involved.

The United States government, by allowing ICE officers to disguise themselves, follows the same intent. It is so there will be no accountability, no opportunity for those taken or beaten to identify the agent, no consequences for their horrendous actions. Let us not model ourselves after Nazi Germany.

The masking of ICE officers and Vance's suggestion that they have "absolute immunity" only emboldens the worst of them to terrorize communities of color and to see peaceful protestors as enemies of the State, deserving to be dragged out of their cars, pepper-sprayed, and even murdered. We should not be allowing armed individuals with masks to intimidate and frighten communities with impunity. They should not be masked. They should wear a badge number and clear identification as to which agency they are with. It is important for public safety that ICE officers can be identified. Without visible identification and uniform standards, fear and public distrust in law enforcement increases. And opposition to their tactics through nonviolent supposedly protected speech will continue.

I urge you to vote **in favor of HB155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings for transparency and safety.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Linda Girdner

941 Fall Ridge Way

Gambrills, MD 21054