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TESTIMONY FOR HB0155
Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

Bill Sponsor: Delegates Williams, Lehman, Peña-Melnyk, et al.

Committee: Judiciary

Organization Submitting: Indivisible Bowie and Beyond (IBBMD)

Person Submitting: Liz Enagonio, co-founder

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony **in favor of HB0155** on behalf of Indivisible Bowie and Beyond (IBBMD). IBBMD is a group of several hundred grassroots activists in Bowie and surrounding areas in Prince George's County, working to bring justice, equality, and people-centric legislation to Maryland.

HB0155 requires the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to develop a model policy prohibiting the use of a face covering in the performance of duty; requires a law enforcement agency to adopt a policy consistent with the model policy developed by the Commission; and prohibits law enforcement officers from wearing face coverings while in the performance of duty in the State, except when actively engaged in an undercover operation.

Requiring law enforcement officers to be identifiable is a basic prerequisite for transparency. Officers conducting law enforcement should be readily identifiable and proud to present themselves as who they are. As well, unidentified masked men present a genuine threat to all community members, who have no way of knowing whether they are being robbed, kidnapped, or murdered. For women and children especially, the sight of a threatening masked man in some sort of bogus "uniform" is horrifying and genuinely life-threatening. It is a minimum requirement of a free society that law enforcement be recognizable, identifiable, and accountable to residents and communities.

IBBMD urges that you support HB0155 and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.