



Delaware-Maryland Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Testimony Prepared for the
Judiciary Committee
on
House Bill 0155
February 20, 2026
Position: Favorable

Chair Bartlett and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am Reverend Melody Hession-Sigmon, assistant to the bishop for public policy in the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, a faith community with congregations in every part of the state.

The prohibition of face coverings on law enforcement in the State of Maryland is an issue of great concern for our immigrant and refugee Lutherans who are directly impacted by ICE presence in our State. There is a deep sense of mistrust in our community. We know that law enforcement officers should not be covering their faces from the public that they pledge to serve and protect. Law enforcement should not be afraid of community members and community members should not be afraid of law enforcement, but face coverings feed greatly into an increasing atmosphere of fear.

When both members of the community and law enforcement can see each others' faces, the interaction on the ground is fundamentally different from what we are seeing with masked officers in Maryland. When both are unmasked, both human faces can see each other more clearly: the human emotion, expression, personality, and witness. We as people of faith strive for practices that help us move towards seeing the imago dei, the image of God, in each other with increasing clarity because we believe that this kind of vision promotes our values of justice, mercy, and peace.

We ask this committee to please show our communities that Maryland is a state that values trust between law enforcement and the communities to whom they have pledged to be public servants. We urge a favorable report.

Reverend Melody Hession-Sigmon