



HB155 Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings

Position: Favorable

February 24, 2026

The Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE), a coalition of education advocacy, civil rights, and community-based organizations committed to eliminating racial disparities in Maryland's education system, **offers favorable testimony in support of House Bill 155** which prohibits law enforcement officers from wearing face coverings while in the performance of duty. This bill is a straightforward but essential transparency measure: Maryland residents have a fundamental right to know who is exercising police power over them. When a person in tactical gear and a mask concealing the face approaches a family — at a home, a school, a workplace — there is no way to determine whether that individual is a sworn, accountable officer or an unidentified federal agent operating outside the bounds of state law. That uncertainty is not incidental. It is, for Black and immigrant communities in particular, a source of profound fear and a direct impediment to the constitutional right to question, refuse, and document law enforcement encounters.

This bill arrives at a critical moment. Governor Moore signed legislation last week ending Maryland's 287(g) agreements, making clear that Maryland will not allow local law enforcement to be deputized as immigration enforcers. ICE's own acting Baltimore field director has signaled that the agency intends to intensify its presence in Maryland in response to the state's ban [The Banner](#) — meaning communities should expect more federal immigration operations, not fewer. In that context, a face covering ban becomes a direct protection: it prevents ICE agents from posing in ways that blur the line between state and federal authority, and it ensures that any officer operating in Maryland under color of law is identifiable and accountable. When agents conceal their identities, they are not just hiding their faces — they are hiding whether their actions are lawful, whether a warrant exists, and whether residents have the right to refuse entry.

For Black families and immigrant communities who already face disproportionate and often traumatic contact with law enforcement, the ability to see, identify, and document who is at their door is not a procedural nicety — it is a civil rights protection. HB 155 aligns Maryland law with the values the state just affirmed by ending 287(g): that those who exercise power over Maryland residents must be known, trained, and accountable. I urge the Committee to pass this bill without delay.

peace & truth,
sharlimar douglass
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