

Dear **Members of the Judiciary Committee,**

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with CASA. I am a resident of **District 46, and I am testifying in support of SB001 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.**



**Showing Up for Racial Justice**

In the State of Maryland, we expect the law enforcement officers who serve our communities to openly identify themselves as such when doing their jobs. Law enforcement agencies have policies requiring officers to wear uniforms or other identifying markers in most circumstances, and we even have a law - Criminal Procedure Article 2-109 - which requires a police officer to identify him or herself by name, agency, and badge number when approaching a citizen for a traffic stop or other investigation.

SB1 would require the creation of a model masking policy banning the routine use of full face masks to conceal the identity of law enforcement officers, and require local and state law enforcement agencies to adopt that policy. Although this bill has been amended and no longer serves its original purpose of attempting to reign in ICE's use of masked officers, it is still valuable because it codifies our longstanding expectation that law enforcement agents in our state will openly identify themselves as such. In this time of eroding democratic norms, we cannot simply assume that unwritten standards will continue to be followed. Without codification of our expectations, there is a concern that other law enforcement agencies may choose to follow the federal government's example of fielding masked officers.

Routine masking by law enforcement officers hinders the accountability we expect from our public servants, and encourages a climate of fear. It also encourages police impersonation and increases the danger of ordinary police operations, because when criminals and law enforcement officers dress the same and cover their faces, the average citizen can find it hard to tell the difference. Initial contact between officer and civilian is often the most uncertain and dangerous moment in a law enforcement encounter, and ensuring that everyone is on the same page about what is happening can help prevent rash and dangerous decisions.

Officers would still be permitted to wear necessary tactical and safety equipment, and full face masks could be authorized under specific, defined circumstances. But use of this policy would reinforce a clear distinction between officers conducting enforcement actions, and criminals hiding their faces to masquerade as law enforcement, making everyone safer. It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB001, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

**Lindsay Keipper**

**2425 Fleet St., Baltimore**

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