

Testimony for HB 0155.pdf

Uploaded by: Alexandra Estes

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable

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

Judiciary Committee

February 20, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair J. Sandy Bartlett, Vice Chair Debra Davis, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Alexandra Estes and I am writing in support of HB0155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.

When I used to report into work, I did not wear a mask to hide my identity. If a colleague or client I interacted with had any issues with my actions, they could clearly identify who I was, I also wore a badge with my name and picture on it. When you are confident that your actions are not harmful and your behavior towards fellow human beings is not deplorable, you know that there is no reason to hide behind a mask.

You know who does hide behind masks? Bank robbers, rapists, and other criminals who have the intent of escaping punishment for their actions. ICE isn't made safer by wearing masks. They are actually creating less safe conditions because the public isn't able to differentiate federal law enforcement from any other criminal who might don a mask.

That's why 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. Furthermore, community members are more likely to intervene if they watch someone being attacked or kidnapped by a masked, unmarked group. There's no way to know if someone is an ICE officer or if they are impersonating an ICE officer.

Our local law enforcement officers are easily identifiable. We should not be allowing armed individuals with masks to intimidate and frighten communities with impunity.

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.

HB155 Testimony 32BJ - Face Coverings.pdf

Uploaded by: Alexandra Margorin

Position: FAV



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INTERNATIONAL UNION
CTW, CLC

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**Testimony of Jaime Contreras, 32BJ SEIU Executive Vice President
House Judiciary Committee
House Bill No. 155 - Favorable
February 24, 2026**

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

32BJ SEIU offers favorable testimony in support of **HB155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.**

32BJ is the largest building service union in the country, representing over 185,000 members up and down the East Coast and over 3,700 members across Maryland. Our members are primarily immigrants and people of color, and make up the workforce of essential cleaners, door-people, airport workers, and other building service workers who keep our homes, workplaces, schools, and transportation hubs up and running.

With our dedicated members, we fight to build a just society where immigrants can live free of fear and are treated with dignity and respect. That is why we at 32BJ SEIU are deeply concerned with the presence of unidentified masked individuals who claim to be federal officers in our communities.

HB155 would ban the use of face coverings by any law enforcement officers or agents in Maryland, including federal, state, county or local law enforcement. The proposition that law enforcement officers should operate with reasonable transparency and accountability is a basic tenet of the rule of law. Every individual being detained should have the right to know who is detaining them, and under what authority.

Over the past year, increasingly reckless federal immigration policy has sown fear and distrust across our union's membership and damaged the broader social fabric that holds our state together. This fear is totally understandable, because not only have ICE agents wrongfully detained numerous U.S. citizensⁱ and lawfully present noncitizens,ⁱⁱ there have also been multiple reports of criminals posing as ICE agents committing robberies, kidnappings, and sexual assaults across several states including Maryland.ⁱⁱⁱ These incidents of officer impersonation are unsurprising given the frequency with which federal agents now don masks to conceal their identities during operations.^{iv}

Due to the chaos created by this administration's approach to immigration enforcement, workers across Maryland are increasingly hesitant to show up for their jobs, employers are seeing disruption and uncertainty in their workplaces, and violations of labor and wage laws are going unaddressed because workers fear that speaking up could put themselves or their families at risk.

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Jaime Contreras, Capital Area District Director

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This climate of fear undermines basic workplace accountability. Retaliation—or the fear of it—is the primary reason workers do not report abuse. When immigration enforcement activity escalates, especially where it intersects with state or local law enforcement, unethical employers are effectively given cover to exploit vulnerable workers.^v That exploitation does not stop with immigrant workers; it threatens safety and standards across entire sectors. Clear protections that separate immigration enforcement from workers’ interactions with government are essential to ensuring that all workers can assert their rights without fear

For these reasons, 32BJ SEIU urges the House Judiciary Committee to issue a **favorable report** on **HB155**.

ⁱ Nicole Foy, *We Found That More Than 170 U.S. Citizens Have Been Held by Immigration Agents. They’ve Been Kicked, Dragged and Detained for Days*, ProPublica, October 16, 2025, <https://www.propublica.org/article/immigration-dhs-american-citizens-arresteddetained-against-will>

ⁱⁱ Heidi Altman, *ICE is detaining indiscriminately. And releasing almost no one*, National Immigration Law Center, October 21, 2025. <https://www.nilc.org/articles/ice-is-detainingindiscriminately-and-releasing-almost-no-one/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Dell Cameron & Caroline Haskins, *FBI Warns of Criminals Posing as ICE, Urges Agents to ID Themselves*, Wired, November 4, 2025, <https://www.wired.com/story/fbi-warns-ofcriminals-posing-as-ice-urges-agents-to-id-themselves/>; Troy Pope & Rafael SanchezCruz, *Police: Man posing as ICE agent sexually assaults woman under threat of deportation in Prince George's County*, WUSA9, June 16, 2023, <https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/crime/fake-ice-agent-sexually-assaultswoman/65-4889aaf6-3b80-45e5-b073-53e36608a98a>; Nuala Mernin, *ICE Raids Are Breeding Dangerous Imitators and Social Division*, Harvard Political Review, December 28, 2025, <https://theharvardpoliticalreview.com/ice-raids-imitators/>. ^{iv} Allie Preston, *Masked and Unidentifiable: The Risks of Federal Law Enforcement Operating Without Identification*, Center for American Progress, August 28, 2025, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/masked-and-unidentifiable-the-risks-offederal-law-enforcement-operating-without-identification/> ^v Daniel Costa, *Immigration enforcement and the workplace*, Economic Policy Institute. April 15, 2025, <https://www.epi.org/publication/immigration-enforcement-and-theworkplace/>

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HB155 SB1 2026 - MAJ Written Testimony .pdf

Uploaded by: Alison Dodge

Position: FAV



2026 WRITTEN TESTIMONY

PUBLIC SAFETY - LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS - PROHIBITION ON FACE COVERINGS

HB155 / SB1 - FAVORABLE

MAJ urges a favorable vote on HB155/SB1. The bill is a necessary, and unfortunate, response to the state of civil liberty protections in our State, and country. This legislation would ensure appropriate measures are implemented and followed to protect citizens and police, while at the same time avoiding the abuse of face coverings we have seen in various “law enforcement” capacities. The transparency of police action is necessary to keeping the public trust in law enforcement, and to protect against intentional abuses of police powers.

HB155/SB1 also provides a necessary incentive for police to follow the law. SB1 removes an officer’s claim for immunity if the new standards are not followed, and is accompanied by a presumption in favor of misconduct. Without such statutory incentive, law enforcement would have little reason to abide by these standards. MAJ supports HB155/SB1 as a necessary step to protect the civil rights of all Marylanders.

Maryland Association for Justice urges a FAVORABLE Report on HB155 / SB1.

About Maryland Association for Justice

The Maryland Association for Justice (MAJ) represents over 1,250 trial attorneys throughout the state of Maryland. MAJ advocates for the preservation of the civil justice system, the protection of the rights of consumers and the education and professional development of its members.

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HB 0155 - Prohibition on Face Coverings 2026 .pdf

Uploaded by: Andrew Lewis

Position: FAV

Andrew Lewis
685 Winding Stream Way, Odenton MD, 21113
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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 0155, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers -
Prohibition on Face Coverings

2/24/2026

TO: Chair J. Sandy Bartlett & Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Andrew Lewis

Members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Andrew Lewis , I live in Odenton Maryland, and I am writing to support HB 0155, Prohibition on Face Coverings, and to change the effective date of this law to as soon as you possibly can.

Accountability is the cornerstone of any form of society. Any place where two or more people meet, be it for commerce; camaraderie, or politics, history shapes these interactions. If I cannot look back and recall how much a grocer charges me for an apple, how can I pay them? If my doctor does not sign my prescription, how will I get my needed medication from a pharmacy?

The ability to look back, and identify who, did what, and when, is central to our ability to have any mutual understanding. How then, can we expect our State to function without accountability in its law enforcement? A population of citizens, empowered by the State to make choices not only of life and death, but of freedom and detainment, must be held accountable. While it is true that members of Law enforcement do require certain protections to make their jobs possible, too many protections make our watchmen unwatchable. Those whom the state empowers to use force should be held more accountable for their actions, not less.

Masks create anonymity, turning the very people we should be looking to for safety and comfort into faceless danger. It turns them from human beings to faceless arms of an already distant government. Masking of law enforcement builds a wall of mistrust between officers and the communities they are sent to protect. Witnesses do not come forward, crimes are not reported, officers are not warned of danger, when the average citizen does not feel safe speaking with members of law enforcement agencies.

Please let Maryland be a safer place for all of us than elsewhere in our country. Prohibiting masked law enforcement is one small step towards ensuring the people wearing those badges are discharging their duties faithfully. I urge you to support SB 0001 and help ensure that Maryland's law enforcement is being held to the highest standards of conduct.

Andrew

Testimony on House Bill 155 - Fragale.pdf

Uploaded by: Angeline Fragale

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable

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

House Judiciary Committee

February 24, 2026

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

My name is Angeline Fragale, and I am writing in support of SB0001 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.

I served in the U.S. Army for five years, as a SIGINT analyst. I have a clear understanding of the difference between local law enforcement operations and military actions.

There is absolutely no reason for ICE agents to cover their faces while on duty. They have weapons. They have a mandate from their agency to round up immigrants and place them in detention. The idea that they would need to hide their identities from immigrants or members of the general public is ridiculous. They have been given a nearly unlimited amount of power.

They are not under threat. They are the threat.

Our Founding Fathers, who knew that unlimited power is deeply dangerous, would be appalled at the sight of masked individuals mindlessly swaggering into communities, harassing citizens and non-citizens alike, all with the idea that they'll never be held to account. I don't care what their citizenship status is, they are people. Human beings, no matter their status, deserve respect. Allowing federal agents to wear masks while they harass people is inhumane and morally repugnant.

It is vitally important for public safety that ICE officers can be identified. Without visible identification and uniform standards, fear and public distrust in law enforcement increases. Furthermore, community members are more likely to intervene if they watch someone being attacked or kidnapped by a masked, unmarked group. There's no way to know if someone is an ICE officer or if they are impersonating an ICE officer.

ICE isn't made safer by wearing masks. They are creating less safe conditions because the public can't tell the difference between federal law enforcement and any other criminal who might don a mask.

Anonymity is the refuge of those who would do harm without consequences, and no agent of the federal government should be shielded from the consequences of their own actions.

When you are confident that your actions are not harmful and your behavior towards fellow human beings is not deplorable, you know that there is no reason to hide behind a mask.

Our local law enforcement officers are easily identifiable. We should not be allowing armed individuals with masks to intimidate and frighten communities with impunity.

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.

Sincerely,

Angeline Fragale

US Army

3RD ACR

Brave Rifles!

HB155 testimony Britton FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Anna Britton

Position: FAV

Testimony in Support of HB 155
Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings
Judiciary Committee
February 20, 2026

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

My name is Anna Britton and I am a resident of Severna Park, Maryland. I am writing in support of HB 155, which would prohibit face coverings for law enforcement officers with necessary exceptions.

HB 155 would increase public safety for Marylanders. The increased presence of masked ICE agents around the country has emboldened criminals to impersonate ICE, five incidents of which were detailed by the FBI in an October 17 memo.¹ The FBI recognizes this increasing risk to public safety and encourages law enforcement to adequately identify themselves.

HB 155 would create a path to accountability for law enforcement misconduct. We have all seen, or are painfully aware, of the videos of ICE and Border Patrol agents killing Renee Good and Alex Pretti in Minnesota. We also know that ICE agents shot Tiago Alexandre Sousa-Martins in Glen Burnie on Christmas Eve of last year. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) lied about the Glen Burnie shooting, and changed their story only after Anne Arundel County police publicly contradicted their statements.² DHS has also refused to cooperate with state investigations into the Minneapolis shootings and the FBI only opened a civil rights probe into the shooting of Pretti after immense public pressure. Accountability will clearly not come swiftly or easily, so we must use every tool at our disposal to increase the chances for accountability in the future.

HB 155 would deter future incidents of misconduct. We know that identification matters, and thus this bill would be an effective deterrent, because DHS has resisted identifying the agents

¹<https://propertyofthepeople.org/document-detail/?doc-id=26364028>

²<https://www.aacounty.org/police-department/about-us/news/anne-arundel-county-police-department-clarification-december-24>

involved in these and other shootings, and Secretary Noem even pressured the media, after Jonathan Ross had been identified as Good's shooter, to stop using his name.³

HB 155 would strengthen community cohesion and trust as well as trust in local law enforcement. Distrust of any one law enforcement agency affects the public perception of all law enforcement officers. But this bill will not just deter criminal impersonation of law enforcement and criminal behavior by law enforcement agents. It will also show Marylanders that their neighbors and state government support them and see all human beings as valuable members of society deserving of respect and accountability.

None of the members of this chamber do their jobs in masks despite the very real threats to all public servants. All law enforcement should be held to the same standard. No government agents, especially those trusted with the authority to use deadly force when necessary, should be able to operate in secrecy and with apparent impunity. **I urge a favorable report on HB 155.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Anna Britton
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³https://www.huffpost.com/entry/kristi-noem-dont-say-ice-agent-jonathan-ross-name_n_696d0428e4b0dbbab17412af

AnnaRubin_HB0155_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: ANNA RUBIN

Position: FAV

AnnaRubin_HB0155_FAV

Feb. 18, 2026

Dr. Anna Rubin

Columbia, MD 21045

HB 155: Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Covering

TO: Honorable Delegate Bartlett and Vice Chair, Davis and members of theHouse Judiciary Committee

FROM: Dr. Anna Rubin

DATE:, February 20, 2026

My name is Anna Rubin. I am a resident of District 13. I am submitting this testimony in support of **HB0155**. I am writing as an artist, a retired educator, and someone involved in a number of Jewish and civic organizations. I am chair of the Columbia Jewish Congregation Social Justice Committee.

The Torah commands us to pursue justice, and our sages instruct us that the methods we use to do so must be just themselves. Like so many others I have watched videos of federal officers violating the constitutional rights of citizens in Maryland and other states and preserving their anonymity by wearing masks. As citizens we need access to courts that state governments can provide to protect our constitutional rights.

Maryland law enforcement officers are now required to keep their faces uncovered and to clearly identify their names except for certain circumstances.

- Many other states have similar laws.
- Transparency increases community collaboration, holds officers accountable, and helps deescalate potential violence.
- ICE agents should not be above the law.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a **favorable report** on **HB0155**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

HB0155 masks.pdf

Uploaded by: Anne Manuel

Position: FAV

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 0155, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers -
Prohibition on Face Coverings**

Chair J. Sandy Bartlett & Members of the House Judiciary Committee

February 24, 2026

My name is Anne Manuel. I've lived in Silver Spring for forty years. I am among a group of neighbors who last year formed North Woodside Civil Resistance out of concern for the threat to our democracy posed by the actions of the Trump administration. I'm writing to express my strong support for HB0155, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.

We are at a truly alarming moment in our country. There's been a lot of talk about what to call this administration's actions – authoritarianism, neo-royalism – even fascism no longer seems a great stretch. Whatever the label, the elements are clear: unbridled military aggression, suppression of dissent, scapegoating of vulnerable groups, and celebration of violence.

A War Department pamphlet produced for U.S. Army personnel in WWII is troublingly relevant today. According to "Fascism!", produced in March 1945, the first technique fascists would use to gain power in the U.S. would be to break down national unity by a "well-planned 'hate campaign' against minority races, religions, and other groups." It's hard not to see this now, as masked, unaccountable thugs viciously attack our immigrant neighbors, all while slandering them as violent criminals and "the worst of the worst." Videos of brutal apprehensions are posted on governmental social media accounts, as if for entertainment.

Of course there are limits to what any individual state can do to restrain the actions of the federal government, no matter how lawless. However if we stand up for our Maryland values, for *American* values, we can throw sand in the gears of the repressive machine and inspire other states to do the same.

Marylanders are taking a stand every day in the streets, parks, and highway overpasses all over the state, even as the Trump administration makes clear that peaceful protesters are also their targets. This body needs to demonstrate some of that same courage.

Unaccountable law enforcement is the essence of a police state. At a bare minimum, this body should insist that those empowered to detain individuals in our state publicly identify themselves. There is no room for masked gunmen doing the government's bidding in a democracy.

HB0155 properly demands that law enforcement *not* wear masks. I would argue the bill should go further, and require that all security forces operating in the state *clearly identify themselves by name, number, and agency*. There is simply no room for a secret police in a democracy.

In addition to the troubling lack of accountability that masked officers represent, they also constitute a grave danger to public security. Criminal impersonation of law enforcement officers is a rising trend, as we became acutely aware last year with the murder of a Minnesota lawmaker and her husband and the shooting of another and his wife by an individual dressed as a police officer.

Public safety is best served when individuals can more quickly and clearly verify officers' identity, not the other way around. Maryland law must make clear that masked, unidentified individuals with guns are operating outside the law. I believe that HB)155 is a step in the right direction toward achieving these goals. Thank you for your consideration.

Anne Manuel
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HB155_ArielleJuberg_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Arielle Juberg

Position: FAV

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 working in collaboration with CASA. I am a resident of District 8. **I am testifying in support of HB 155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

I assume that law enforcement officers who serve our communities will 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.

Throughout 2025, we saw copious news coverage of federal law enforcement actions conducted by officers wearing street clothes and balaclavas. The fact that incidents of police impersonation have been on the rise in Maryland and nationally is not a coincidence: *when it becomes impossible to determine who is a legitimate law enforcement officer, criminals can more plausibly claim to be police by simply putting on a mask, no fake uniform or badge required.* Even the FBI has recognized the danger, circulating a bulletin to law enforcement agencies in October 2025 that warned criminals were taking advantage of routine mask-wearing by law enforcement to disguise themselves as ICE agents.¹ This confusion also makes routine law enforcement operations more dangerous. 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.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB 155, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Arielle Juberg
3411 Upton Road
Baltimore, MD 21234
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

¹ Cameron, Dell & Haskins, Caroline, "FBI warns of criminals posing as ICE, urges agents to ID themselves." WIRED Magazine, Nov. 4, 2025. <https://www.wired.com/story/fbi-warns-of-criminals-posing-as-ice-urges-agents-to-id-themselves/>

Testimony on House Bill HB155.pdf

Uploaded by: Arndt Elaine

Position: FAV

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

February 20, 2026

As a resident of Baltimore, I have seen the effort it takes to build and re-build community trust in law enforcement.

It is imperative that hard-won trust be continued and improved. Allowing face coverings for Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers decreases trust in law enforcement since community members do not know who they are and cannot identify them in cases of misconduct or abuse by the officers (or if indeed they are members of ICE).

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. Furthermore, community members are more likely to intervene if they watch someone being attacked or kidnapped by a masked, unmarked group. There's no way to know if someone is an ICE officer or if they are impersonating an ICE officer.

Our local law enforcement officers are easily identifiable. We should not be allowing armed individuals with masks to intimidate and frighten communities with impunity.

I urge you to vote in favor of HB155 - Prohibition on Face Coverings for transparency and safety. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Elaine Arndt
District 46 Constituent

HB 0155 - Prohibition on Face Coverings 2026.pdf

Uploaded by: Ayla Hurley

Position: FAV

Ayla Hurley
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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 0155, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers -
Prohibition on Face Coverings

2/24/2026

TO: Chair J. Sandy Bartlett & Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Ayla Hurley

Members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Ayla Hurley, I live in Columbia, Maryland, and I am writing to support HB 0155, Prohibition on Face Coverings, and to change the effective date of this law to July - or sooner, whenever possible.

In our state, we strive to hold criminals accountable. That should include when the crimes are committed by the very people meant to prevent them. That cannot be done if law enforcement hides behind a mask. If anyone walked into a bank with a mask on and a gun drawn, everyone there might assume their lives were in danger. Yet some members of law enforcement would walk masked in public with a gun drawn, and expect to be trusted.

As a lifelong Marylander, struggling to deal with the day to day injustices of the leaders of our country, masked law enforcement of any kind is simply terrifying. It's dystopian. It evokes the historical imagery of cops moonlighting as members of the Ku Klux Klan. I'm scared - I have to imagine that my neighbors whose first language isn't English are even more afraid. When people are afraid, they may act in ways that are impulsive, or make a tense situation worse. We don't need more tense situations between ourselves and law enforcement officers.

Please let Maryland be a safer place for all of us than elsewhere in our country. Prohibiting masked law enforcement is one small step towards ensuring the people wearing those badges are discharging their duties faithfully. I urge you to support HB 0155 and help ensure that Maryland's law enforcement is being held to the highest standards of conduct.

Candle Testimony HB155.pdf

Uploaded by: Birgit Sharp

Position: FAV



Testimony of CANDLE - Favorable with amendments

Regarding HB155, Public Safety - Prohibition on Face Coverings

Submitted by Birgit Sharp on 2/20/2026

This testimony is being submitted on behalf of CANDLE*. We support enacting HB155, which would prohibit the use of face coverings by law enforcement officers under certain conditions. To strengthen the effectiveness of the legislation we respectfully recommend amending the bill to clarify the criteria used to enforce those restrictions.

In our view, Maryland urgently needs to restrict the use of face coverings by all law enforcement officers for several reasons. Masking by officers harms the community by:

- **impeding accountability and transparency:** When agents are unidentifiable, it is difficult to hold them accountable for misconduct or civil rights violations, which is a core tenet of law enforcement in a democracy;
- **undermining public trust:** Masked, unidentifiable agents operating in public spaces can appear as "secret police" or a "paramilitary force," which erodes community trust and hinders cooperation between law enforcement and residents;
- **increasing public safety risks and impersonation:** The presence of unidentifiable officers makes it difficult for community members or other law enforcement to determine their legitimacy, leading to potentially dangerous escalations. There have been reports of criminals impersonating masked federal agents to commit crimes such as kidnapping, robbery, and sexual assault;
- **hindering local law enforcement operations:** Because the general public cannot always distinguish between federal agents and local police, the actions of unidentifiable ICE agents, for example, can negatively affect the community's trust in local law enforcement, making their jobs more difficult; and
- **increasing psychological intimidation:** Masking is often viewed as a tactic to instill fear and confusion both in those being interrogated and in community members.

While we support the bill, we are concerned about ambiguities in the guidelines for developing model policies on the use of face coverings. Specifically:

- under proposed subsection (P)(2)(II)(3), face coverings should not be permitted on the basis of "generalized and undifferentiated fears and apprehensions" about the safety of law enforcement officers (see page 2, lines 23-25)
- the words "generalized" and "undifferentiated" could be interpreted in ways contrary to the public interest. For instance, ICE officials could simply say that immigrants, bystanders, or protesters—as a class—create a "differentiated" fear and thus assert that the restrictions are inapplicable to their work.

To address our concerns, we recommend striking (P)(2)(II)(3) and inserting text stating that face coverings cannot be justified for purposes other than those itemized in the bill unless the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission reviews and approves a request for an exemption to address unanticipated exigent circumstances that necessitate the use of face coverings for a limited period of time. The Commission should report to the General Assembly on any exceptions granted under this provision.

candle.shines25@gmail.com

Far better to light the candle, than to curse the darkness.

* Candle is the Community Action Network for Democracy, Liberties and Equality, based in Anne Arundel and Calvert counties. Our membership is close to 150 people.

Testimony on HB0155 Facial Coverings.pdf

Uploaded by: Catherine Morrison

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable
HB155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings
Judiciary Committee
February 24, 2026

Dear Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Catherine Morrison, and I am writing to express my strong support for HB0155, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.

Public safety depends on the ability to clearly identify law enforcement officers. When officers wear masks, it becomes impossible for the public to distinguish between legitimate law enforcement activity and criminal behavior. This lack of transparency creates dangerous conditions; community members may feel compelled to intervene in an incident if they cannot verify that those involved are officers rather than individuals intent on harm.

The use of masks by ICE officers or any law enforcement agency fosters fear and distrust within the community. While I recognize concerns regarding personal privacy and "doxing," this is a risk shared by many public-facing roles, including elected officials. Accountability requires that those granted the authority to enforce the law do so without hiding their identities.

Our local law enforcement officers are easily identifiable, and federal agencies should be held to similar standards of transparency. We must not allow armed individuals to operate with masks, which only serves to intimidate the communities they serve.

I urge you to vote in favor of HB0155 to ensure greater transparency and safety for all.

Catherine Morrison

HB0155_Public_Safety_Law_Enforcement_Officers_Proh

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY FOR HB0155

Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Williams

Committee: Judiciary

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Aileen Alex, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0155 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Our members are pretty horrified at what has been happening with federal officers, whether they are Immigration Enforcement or other federal agencies, coming into communities in force wearing military clothes, carrying weaponry that is not suitable for the jobs they are doing, with faces covered like paramilitary gestapos. This serves no one but the irresponsible administration that sent them out like this in the first place.

Face coverings make anyone who wears them and has a weapon feel invincible and that there will be no repercussions for any action they take, no matter how brutal, because they are anonymous. The face coverings terrify anyone who they come near and cause many people to run away out of fear. This gives the officer license to chase them down and inflict more harm.

Law Enforcement Officers used to approach people in a more open and less aggressive manner, so our streets did not seem like something out of a war zone. We have to get back to that. This bill, which we are overwhelmingly in favor of, is a first step. Unmask the people who feel that they are invincible and make them do their jobs without all the aggression. Other than people who have committed major crimes (murder, rape, burglary, etc.), most immigrants have only committed a civil crime (a crime on par with a traffic ticket) which does not warrant the level of a approach that is currently happening.

This bill will prohibit Law Enforcement Officers, whether they are state, local, or federal from hiding their faces with an exception for undercover officers. There are other exceptions for gas masks, masks to protect from viruses, etc. Officers covering their faces can be charged with a misdemeanor and, if convicted, face up to 2 years in jail and a penalty of \$2,000. They also waive any immunity to civil action.

While we understand that there must be exceptions, we feel that the officers involved will use one of those exceptions to cover their faces. We feel, but are unwilling to derail this legislation, that there

should be additional safeguards. For example, any Federal officers coming into Maryland should notify the local police who should ensure they are aware of this law. It would be best if an officer was on the scene to ensure that the law is being followed, but that could put a strain on the local police force

.
The Maryland Legislative Coalition wholeheartedly supports this bill and recommends a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

AFSCME Council 3 Testimony HB 155_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Christian Gobel

Position: FAV



1410 Bush Street (Suite A)
Baltimore, MD 21230
Phone: 410-547-1515
Email: info@afscmemd.org

Patrick Moran – President

**HB 155 – Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings
Judiciary Committee
February 24, 2026**

FAVORABLE

AFSCME Council 3 supports House Bill 155. Since the beginning of the new federal administration, Americans throughout our country have been stricken with fear, alarm, and confusion by federal law enforcement actions against people in our communities, including our neighbors who are immigrants. Many times, these events have unfolded with no clear identifying information or insignia that the individuals engaged in actions against people in our communities are federal law enforcement officers. Across our country, swift, unconscionable actions by federal agents, including smashing people’s car windows and dragging them from their vehicles, have instilled fear and mistrust in our law enforcement.

AFSCME Council 3 represents approximately 55,000 public service workers at the state, county, and municipal levels of government. AFSCME members are on the frontlines every day across Maryland providing critical public services that make our communities run.

Transparency, accountability, and ensuring law enforcement carries out its operations with integrity cannot take place when law enforcement agents categorically hide their faces behind masks or other face coverings.

House Bill 155 establishes reasonable reforms to begin rebuilding trust between law enforcement and everyday residents in our communities. The bill requires the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to develop a policy that prohibits the use of face coverings by law enforcement in the course of their duties, subject to certain exceptions. The requirements do not apply to law enforcement officers actively engaged in an undercover operation.

AFSCME Council 3 believes these reforms are reasonable, provide flexibility to enable face coverings by law enforcement where appropriate, and will help to build trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 155.

Testimony on House Bill 155. cmy.pdf

Uploaded by: Christina Yuan

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill 155– Favorable
HB155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

Judiciary Committee

February 24, 2026

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

My name is Christina M Yuan, MD and I am a resident of Prince George’s County, Maryland. I am writing in support of **HB155 – Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings**

I am a retired physician, and although I wore a mask not infrequently when working, it was not to hide my identity. A health care provider always introduces themselves, explains their role, and wears a nametag. The use of the mask (and sometimes even higher levels of personal protective equipment) is to prevent the transmission of disease, and to keep patients and providers safe. I wasn’t using the mask to hide my identity from the patient, their family, or other health care providers.

It equally important for the rule of law, public trust, and public safety that all law enforcement officers be able to be identified. ICE and CBP officers must not wear masks to conceal their identity. They must have visible identification and uniform standards. Otherwise, community members are being attacked and detained by masked, armed unidentifiable people, who may or may not be officials. Our local law enforcement officers are easily identifiable as such. We should require that federal officers meet the same standard—we have a right to know who our federal, state and local law enforcement officers are.

Please vote in favor of HB155-Public Safety-Law Enforcement Officers-Prohibition on Face Coverings.

Christina M. Yuan, MD, Laurel, MD

SEIU Local 500 - Testimony in Support of HB 155 20

Uploaded by: Christopher Cano

Position: FAV



Testimony - HB 155, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings
Favorable
House Judiciary Committee
February 24, 2026
Christopher C. Cano, MPA
Director of Political & Legislative Affairs on Behalf of SEIU Local 500

Honorable Chairwoman Bartlett & Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

SEIU Local 500 represents thousands of public sector workers in Maryland who serve our communities every day—from education and social services to public safety-adjacent roles. Central to our mission is advocating for transparent, accountable, and community-centered public safety systems that earn the trust of all residents.

House Bill 155 advances these principles by setting statewide standards on the use of face coverings by law enforcement officers while on duty. At a moment when trust between communities and law enforcement remains fragile, adopting clear policies that prioritize visibility, accountability, and public confidence is critical.

Recent national events illustrate why this is so important. Across the country, federal law enforcement activity—particularly by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)—has raised widespread concerns about overreach, lack of transparency, and harm to public trust. In Minnesota, for example, a U.S. immigration agent fatally shot a citizen during an enforcement operation, an incident that has triggered strong public outcry and long-running litigation alleging excessive and dangerous federal tactics.

In other shocking examples, federal agents forcibly entered a private home and brought a naturalized U.S. citizen into freezing conditions in minimal clothing, later releasing him without explanation or apology—a moment that resonated nationally and elicited widespread criticism.

Communities in multiple states have pushed back against what they describe as ICE overreach, passing resolutions and supporting lawsuits arguing that federal enforcement actions have exceeded legal authority and undermined civil liberties.

These controversies aren't isolated—they reflect broader concerns about law enforcement conduct without clear guardrails. When people in our communities feel anonymous forces can operate without accountability or identification, it chills civic participation, erodes trust, and can make it harder for other public servants—teachers, health workers, social service providers—to do their jobs effectively.

House Bill 155's focus on ensuring officers remain identifiable and accountable when carrying out official duties responds directly to this moment. The legislation strikes the right balance by providing exceptions for bona fide safety, tactical, and medical needs, while preventing blanket or pretextual use of face coverings that shield officers from accountability.

Our members see daily the consequences when public systems lack transparent standards. Clear statewide guidelines for law enforcement foster stronger relationships between officers and the communities they serve—a necessary foundation for public safety that protects workers, families, and neighborhoods alike.

For these reasons, SEIU Local 500 urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 155. Thank you to House leadership for recognizing the importance of transparency and public trust through this legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Christopher C. Cano, MPA
Director of Political & Legislative Affairs
SEIU Local 500

LWVMD_02.24.2026_HB 0155_Law Enforcement Officers

Uploaded by: Cynthia Boddie-Willis

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

HB 0155: Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings

POSITION: Favorable

By: Linda T. Kohn, President

Date: February 24, 2026

The League of Women Voters supports a criminal justice system at the federal, state and local level that is just, effective, equitable, transparent, and that fosters public trust at all stages, including policing practices. As noted by the [Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights](#) of which the League is a member, government agents that conceal their identities not only erode trust but also instill fear, undermine due process, and strip citizens of their ability to hold power accountable.

The League also supports policing practices that promote safety for both law enforcement officers and the communities they serve. As noted in an August 2025 [report from the Center for American Progress](#), the presence of unidentifiable officers makes policing more challenging and dangerous, as both community members and fellow officers could easily mistake them for lawbreakers. Consequent misidentification may result in refusal to comply with well-intentioned directives on the one hand and avoidable “friendly fire” incidents on the other. Moreover, all law enforcement agents should be held to the same policing standards and be afforded the same protections in the line of duty. It is not clear that unmasked federal law enforcement agents are more likely to be subjected to “doxxing” (a practice where personal information is shared as a precursor to harassment) than their state and local counterparts.

In calling for the Maryland Police Standards and Training Commission to develop a policy affirming that all law enforcement agencies operating within the state of Maryland must commit to transparency, accountability and public trust; that the authorized use of face coverings be limited to specific and clearly defined circumstances, and that the generalized and undifferentiated apprehension about law enforcement safety is not sufficient to justify the use of face coverings, HB 0155 adheres to principles espoused by the League.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland, representing nearly 2,000 citizens throughout Maryland, **strongly urges you to issue a favorable report.**

HB0155 FAV Judiciary.pdf

Uploaded by: Cynthia Pearson

Position: FAV

Cynthia Pearson
4312 Sheridan Street, University Park, MD 20782
(301) 938-0356
cindy.pearson4312@gmail.com

Committee: Judiciary
Testimony on HB0155- Public Safety Law Enforcement Officers Prohibition on Face Coverings
Organization: Individual
Person Submitting: Cynthia Pearson
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: 24 January 2026

Dear Chairman Bartlett and members of the committee,

I am writing in favor of HB0155 (Public Safety Law Enforcement Officers Prohibition on Face Coverings). I believe that banning law enforcement face masks in all but certain situations -- as specified in this bill -- is not only important, but it is also feasible. Many people testifying in support of this legislation emphasize the need for a state law to ban masking by law enforcement officers. The arguments in favor of the need for this law are compelling. Allowing law enforcement officers to wear masks supports criminality, both directly and indirectly. Criminals can easily impersonate masked law enforcement officers, expanding their opportunities to commit crimes. People who encounter masked officers are unlikely to develop trusting relationships with law enforcement and may be less likely to report crimes or assist officers trying to solve crimes. These problems are strong arguments in favor of banning masks. Some opponents of banning masks claim that law enforcement officers need to cover their faces to protect themselves from people who might later harm them. I believe that claim is exaggerated. Unmasked law enforcement officers interact with criminals all the time, including some very dangerous ones. Yet they conscientiously do their jobs, arresting criminals and testifying in court. One of my favorite members of my extended family was a police officer who spent several years on the narcotics task force in his city. He arrested and testified against some really bad folks who were running very lucrative businesses making meth. His face was always uncovered. He's now retired after serving for more than twenty-five years. His experience and the experience of tens of thousands of other law enforcement officers who have worked without masks are important to consider. Except in certain situations, which this legislation allows for, law enforcement officers can safely work without masks and they should do so.

For all these reasons, I recommend a favorable report on HB0155.

Thank you,

Cynthia Pearson

Test HB 155 MD Face coverings Feb 24.pdf

Uploaded by: Cynthia Sokolow

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill 155 – Favorable

HB 155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

Judiciary Committee

February 24, 2026

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

I, Cynthia Sokolow of Howard County, MD, offer favorable testimony in **support of HB 155**.

All law enforcement officers, including federal agents, should keep their faces uncovered and wear clearly identifiable regulated uniforms and badges. Exceptions would be for undercover missions and other certain circumstances.

As women, we must constantly be aware of our surroundings. Whenever we feel our immediate safety could be compromised, we search for recognizable trusted law enforcement officials by their state or county issued uniform and badge. We would never expect them to be wearing intimidating masks. We are more likely to report crimes and feel more secure if our law enforcement were not hiding behind face coverings.

Criminals can easily impersonate ICE agents and other law enforcement just by wearing plain clothes and masks.

Continuing to be masked and unidentifiable will only increase confusion and discomfort in the community. Confidence in local and state police has been declining. In order to restore trust, all who enforce laws in Maryland, should not have their faces covered.

I urge to you to vote **in favor of HB 155**.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Sokolow

21042

favorable report on HB 639.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Sokolow

21042

HB155 - ban LE face covering.pdf

Uploaded by: Daryl Yoder

Position: FAV

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 44A. **I am testifying in support of HB155 - 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.

Throughout 2025, we saw copious news coverage of federal law enforcement actions conducted by officers wearing street clothes and balaclavas. The fact that incidents of police impersonation have been on the rise in Maryland and nationally is not a coincidence: when it becomes impossible to determine who is a legitimate law enforcement officer, criminals can more plausibly claim to be police by simply putting on a mask, no fake uniform or badge required. Even the FBI has recognized the danger, circulating a bulletin to law enforcement agencies in October 2025 that warned criminals were taking advantage of routine mask-wearing by law enforcement to disguise themselves as ICE agents.¹ This confusion also makes routine law enforcement operations more dangerous. 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.

HB155 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 law enforcement agencies operating in Maryland to adopt that policy or its equivalent. 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 HB155, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Daryl Yoder, 309 Glenmore Ave., Catonsville, MD 21228

Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

¹ Cameron, Dell & Haskins, Caroline, "FBI warns of criminals posing as ICE, urges agents to ID themselves." WIRED Magazine, Nov. 4, 2025. <https://www.wired.com/story/fbi-warns-of-criminals-posing-as-ice-urges-agents-to-id-themselves/>

Trone HB155 FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: David Trone

Position: FAV

From the Desk of Congressman David Trone

February 24, 2026

The Honorable Sandy Bartlett
Judiciary Committee
101 Lowe House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Debra Davis
Judiciary Committee
101 Lowe House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the Committee,

I write in support of *House Bill 155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings*.

This bill is a crucial step toward ensuring that state and local officers act in ways that foster trust and public safety, rather than instilling fear. It helps ensure that communities can see and identify the officers who are protecting them. Law enforcement should be visible and accountable to the people they serve, so that residents feel safe calling for help, reporting crimes, and seeking assistance without fear or confusion.

In Maryland, like across the nation, we have seen the very real consequences of unregulated and aggressive ICE actions. The deaths of Renee Good and Alex Pretti—two U.S. citizens fatally shot by federal immigration officers in Minnesota—have shaken families, traumatized communities, and shown how aggressive enforcement can spiral into needless violence and loss of life. These events remind us powerfully of what happens when law enforcement operates without enough visibility, oversight, or accountability.

I also want to be absolutely clear: I value and support the hard work our Maryland state and local law enforcement officers do every day. Maryland police serve with integrity, courage, and commitment to keeping our neighborhoods safe. They deserve clear policies that help them build trust with all residents, tools that allow them to engage with the public without unnecessary fear or confusion, and standards that reflect our values of transparency and accountability. When I served as Congressman of Maryland's 6th District, I had the privilege of working closely with our law enforcement officers and know firsthand that we share the same goal: strong, safe communities built on trust between officers and the public.

This legislation does not weaken law enforcement—it supports officers. Safety and trust are stronger when the public can clearly see who is responsible for enforcing the law. This bill helps create a path where law enforcement and community trust go hand in hand, and where policy reflects our shared commitment to justice, dignity, and respect for every Maryland resident.

For these reasons, I strongly urge your support of *House Bill 155*.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Trone", written in a cursive style.

David Trone
Former Member of Congress

WRITTEN TESTIMONY HB 155 unmasking.pdf

Uploaded by: Debbie Shulman

Position: FAV

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY
On House Bill HB-155**

Public Safety-Law Enforcement Officers-Prohibition of Face Coverings

Favorable

Judicial Committee

February 24, 2026

Dear Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is **Deborah (“Debbie”) Shulman**. I am a **31-year resident of Olney, Maryland, in District 14**, and I am submitting this testimony **in strong support HB-155**

HB- 155 is a necessary and timely measure that promotes **accountability, transparency, and public safety**. Currently, federal law enforcement agents—particularly ICE—are permitted to conduct enforcement actions while **masking their faces and concealing their identities**. This practice undermines public trust, weakens constitutional policing, and creates fear within our communities.

HB -155 strengthens public safety by increasing transparency. When officers are clearly identifiable, residents can distinguish legitimate law enforcement from impersonators. Nationwide, there has been an increase in reports of individuals posing as law enforcement officers to intimidate or harm others. Clear identification helps prevent confusion, fraud, and abuse and protects both the public and legitimate officers.

HB -155 protects civil liberties and due process. Masked or unidentified enforcement actions can create fear and uncertainty, particularly in immigrant communities. Transparency is foundational to constitutional policing. HB-155 promotes accountability where it is currently lacking, especially among federal agents operating within Maryland.

Unmasking law enforcement builds community trust. Public safety depends on cooperation between residents and law enforcement. When people fear interactions with masked and unidentifiable officers, they are far less likely to report crimes, serve as witnesses, or seek help when they need it most.

HB-155 reflects Maryland values. Our state must set clear and consistent standards for all law enforcement operating within our borders. Federal officers conducting civilian enforcement while

wearing masks is inconsistent with Maryland's commitment to dignity, fairness, and the rule of law.

There is also a **fiscal impact** to consider. Enforcement actions lacking transparency frequently leads to increased litigation and court costs, which are ultimately borne by taxpayers. Accountability reduces unnecessary legal exposure and protects public resources.

HB-155 does not prevent lawful enforcement. Officers can continue to do their jobs, but they must do so **responsibly, lawfully, and transparently**.

No person is illegal.

Everyone deserves dignity and constitutional protections.

Masked enforcement emboldens misconduct and must not be allowed in Maryland.

Ending 287(g) agreements and unmasking ICE are both aligned with **Maryland's values and commitment to justice**.

I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a **favorable report on HB-155**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah ("Debbie") Shulman

4137 Danube Ct Olney, MD

20832

debbie.j.shulman@gmail.com

240-461-0699

HB155 Favorable 2026.pdf

Uploaded by: Debi Jasen

Position: FAV

Judiciary Committee
House Bill 155
Favorable

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Judiciary Committee;

Please give House Bill 155, regarding law enforcement being prohibited from using face coverings in most circumstances, a FAVORABLE report.

As we have seen throughout the country, law enforcement officers who wear face coverings cannot be identified, and thus cannot be held accountable for their actions. This is unconstitutional. The people have the right to know the identities of those who have harassed, assaulted, detained, and/or arrested them. The people have the right to know the identities of those who trespass on their property, and of those who break down their doors.

I recognize that it will be difficult to prosecute federal officers under this legislation, and perhaps this bill is but a symbolic measure in regards to ICE. However, it is an important piece of legislation in that it will at least cover law enforcement of the state and local entities. And there is always the chance that the courts will find that this law also pertains to federal officers. We need all the help we can get to counter the fascist actions of the federal government.

Please give House Bill 155 a Favorable report. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Debi Jasen
Pasadena, MD

HB 155 Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers –

Uploaded by: deborah miller

Position: FAV



**Testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 155 – Public Safety – Law Enforcement
Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings
Judiciary Committee
February 24, 2026**

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) serves as the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community. We represent over 100 Jewish social service agencies, synagogues, and schools throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on freedom, justice, equity, and pluralism. We work throughout the region to advocate for our nonprofits that serve the most vulnerable on a non-sectarian basis and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the Jewish community and all Marylanders.

The JCRC supports House Bill 155 which 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. It requires law enforcement agencies to adopt a policy consistent with the model policy. SB 1 also prohibits law enforcement officers from wearing face coverings in the performance of duty except when actively engaged in an undercover operation.

The JCRC understands the importance of balancing the security of our state with individuals' due process rights. It is critical for law enforcement to keep Maryland safe, and we also must remain a warm and welcoming community while we do so. To be effective, local police must garner the public's trust and not instill fear with officers hiding their identities while making warrantless arrests. Supporting immigrants has always been a priority for the JCRC, especially since we, the Jewish people, have been immigrants. We know all too well what it feels like to be vulnerable and to be attacked for who we are. Today, our immigrant community is under attack -- Parents go to work, but don't come home, or worse, they are torn away from their children while dropping them off at school. We are witnessing an unprecedented level of inhumanity and cruelty as anonymous officers wearing face coverings appear in our communities.

The JCRC will always speak up for its allies when they face hardship and injustice. House Bill 155 tells immigrants that we are here for them – to stand up for their rights, to see that they receive due process, and to fight for their dignity and respect. The JCRC is committed to ensuring that Maryland remains an inclusive, compassionate and caring community where everyone feels safe and not subject to arrests by law enforcement hiding their identities and instilling fear and tearing communities apart. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report for House Bill 155.

Favorable. HB 155 Face Masks .pdf

Uploaded by: Eileen Benecke

Position: FAV

February 20, 2026

Support for House Bill 155, Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings.

Good afternoon, Delegate Sandy Barlett, Chair, Delegate Debra Davis, Vice Chair, and members of the Judiciary Committee.

Anonymous policing undermines transparency, frustrates accountability systems, and erodes community trust, especially in communities that already experience disproportionate contact with law enforcement. By defining “face covering” broadly to include opaque masks, garments, helmets, or other items that conceal or obscure the face, HB 155 addresses the reality of modern tactical gear and protest-related deployments. At the same time, the bill carefully preserves appropriate exceptions, including those for necessary protective equipment, weather-related gear, and specialized operations where face coverings can be justified by specific, articulable safety needs.

Maryland’s approach in HB 155 is part of a broader national movement toward “No Secret Police”-style reforms that seek to ensure officers exercising state authority are both visible and identifiable. States such as California and Washington, as well as pending proposals in Virginia and other jurisdictions, have moved to prohibit opaque face coverings for law enforcement while preserving narrow exceptions for undercover work and safety-related equipment.

One of the earliest and most visible of these laws in California has already been partially enjoined where it was drafted to target federal officers for special restrictions, rather than applying a neutral rule across all law enforcement. In issuing that injunction, the federal court also indicated that states have a viable path forward when they adopt even-handed, generally applicable bans and identification-display requirements that apply equally to federal, state, and local officers and do not single out federal personnel for disadvantage. By structuring HB 155 as a uniform rule for all law enforcement operating in Maryland, the General Assembly can both advance transparency and align with the contours courts have articulated for constitutionally sound regulation in this area.

HB 155 does more than express a policy preference; it builds a framework that can be enforced.

- It requires the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to develop a model policy prohibiting the use of face coverings by law enforcement officers in the performance of duty, while specifying the limited circumstances in which face coverings may be authorized.
- It mandates that each law enforcement agency in the State adopt a policy consistent with, and no less stringent than, the Commission’s model policy.
- It makes clear that generalized and undifferentiated fear or apprehension about officer safety is not, by itself, a valid basis for authorizing face coverings; instead, authorization must be grounded in specific and clearly defined circumstances.
- It establishes that violations constitute police misconduct and creates a misdemeanor offense, with potential imprisonment and fines, while also providing that an officer who violates the statute waives immunity in related civil actions.

I respectfully urge the Committee to give HB 155 a favorable report. Thank you.

Eileen Benecke, Frederick, Maryland

Testimony drafted with assistance from Perplexity AI

HB155-Zeller-Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Eileen Zeller

Position: FAV

House Bill 155:
Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings
House Judiciary
February 24, 2026
Position: FAVORABLE

Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Eileen Zeller. I live in Clarksville, MD (District 9A). I am writing in support of HB 155.

I feel viscerally about this issue. Although my parents and grandparents survived the horrors of Nazi Germany, the majority of our family—dozens of their brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins—were murdered in concentration camps. Before that, they were terrorized in the streets, in their workplaces, in their schools, and in their homes by Brown Shirts and the Gestapo—none of whom were masked.

I will not attempt to draw direct analogies between the Gestapo and ICE. But when you have brown skin in the United States and are stopped by a masked individual dressed as law enforcement who demands to know whether you are a citizen, the terror is the same.

Policing in a democracy depends on public consent, not fear. Law enforcement already holds significant power: weapons, the authority to detain and arrest, legal protections, and institutional backing. When officers are anonymous, that power imbalance deepens.

I support HB 155 because for democracy and the rule of law to survive, law enforcement must be accountable—not a source of fear and intimidation.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 155.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Eileen Zeller
12808 Brighton Dam Road
Clarksville, MD 21029

Amica Center Favorable Testimony HB 155.pdf

Uploaded by: Eric Lopez

Position: FAV



Formerly known as CAIR Coalition

1025 Connecticut Avenue NW,
Suite 701 | Washington, DC 20036

www.amicacenter.org

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 155

HB 155 – Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings

House Judiciary Committee

February 20, 2026

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

Amica Center for Immigrant Rights (Amica Center) is pleased to offer **a favorable testimony in strong support of HB 155 - Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings.**

The Amica Center. We are a non-profit organization that provides pro bono legal defense services to community members detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Maryland and the DMV area. Our organization has specialized in detained removal defense for the past 25 years and are leaders in creating systemic changes in the immigration system for the benefit of vulnerable non-citizen community members.

Masked Law Enforcement Erodes Public Trust. Law enforcement officers who wear masks break the public trust by creating a sense of intimidation and fear into engagements with community members.¹ Mask wearing contributes to the risk of escalation because it leaves doubt to the legitimacy of the law enforcement action and to whether it is a law enforcement officer engaging in valid operations. Even former ICE policy regulatory agents have spoken publicly about the dangers of utilizing masks in the field.² As pointed out by former ICE employee, ‘It’s very dangerous. . . [h]ow do you know that you need to not resist to avoid arrest, as opposed to resist arrest to possibly survive the encounter?’

Our Clients Fear Masked Officers. Our organization has been providing legal services to non-citizens in ICE custody for over 25 years. But this past year has been different from anything our clients have previously confronted. They are terrified of the sight of masked

¹ Leila Fadel, et. al, “Masked ICE agents are spurring fear and confusion across the U.S.”, *National Public Radio*, July 10, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/07/09/nx-s1-5440311/ice-raids-masked-agents>

² Jenny Jarvie, “ICE agents wearing mask add new levels of intimidation, confusion during L.A. raids,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 7, 2025, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-07-07/masking-of-federal-agents-very-dangerous-and-perfectly-legal>



Formerly known as CAIR Coalition

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officers posted up in immigrant neighborhoods. There is no certainty of whether the masked people pulling them over in their vehicle is law enforcement. Additionally, many of our clients have experienced persecution or torture in the past at the hands of law enforcement or private actors and being approached by masked individuals can invoke a similar type of fear.

House Bill 155 takes a critical step towards affirming that there are transparency and accountability for law enforcement officers engaged in their duties in Maryland.

Through the course of our work, we regularly represent community members who have been the victims of crimes and who have relied on law enforcement for help in their most vulnerable moments. Trust and accountability in our law enforcement is foundational to creating a sense of safety for everyone in Maryland. No one, including law enforcement officers, are beyond reproach of our legal system. Prohibiting wearing masks holds officers accountable for their actions.

Additionally, HB 155 includes sensible exceptions in circumstances that require masks. This bill recognizes circumstances that may require the use of masks by law enforcement. As such, it is well tailored to not impede law enforcement officers from engaging in their duties.

The individuals that we serve would greatly benefit from this bill. It would return to them a semblance of safety in their daily lives that is no longer there. Everyone should be free of fear and intimidation from law enforcement officers. Clear law enforcement boundaries build trust, strengthening communities and institutions. **For these reasons, the Amica Center urges the committee to provide a favorable report on HB 1.**

Sincerely,

Eric Lopez
Deputy Program Director
Amica Center for Immigrant Rights
10 E. North Ave
Baltimore, MD 21202

HB155_Edwards_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Farnaz Edwards

Position: FAV

Farnaz Edwards
18680 Queen Elizabeth Dr.
Brookeville, MD 20833
District 14

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB155, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers -
Prohibition on Face Coverings
February 24, 2026

Dear Chair Williams, and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of House Bill 0155, a commonsense public safety measure that strengthens transparency, accountability, and community trust in law enforcement.

When law enforcement officers interact with the public, clear visibility of the officer's face helps community members identify who is enforcing the law and fosters trust in policing. Officers who are easily recognized are more accountable to the communities they serve, and residents feel safer engaging with officers they can see and identify. As we have unfortunately seen in other parts of the country, in jurisdictions where officers operate anonymously behind masks, community fear and suspicion can grow, undermining legitimacy.

Masked enforcement creates confusion about who is a legitimate officer, increasing the risk of criminal impersonation of law enforcement, which endangers the public and officers alike. Clear identification protects communities, institutions, and officers from dangerous misunderstandings.

This bill aligns with those values by ensuring that law enforcement officers are identifiable and cannot hide behind masks in law enforcement interactions.

In sum, HB 0155 represents a commonsense, balanced approach to promoting transparency, protecting public confidence, and preserving officer effectiveness where appropriate. Please let Maryland be a safer place for all of us. Prohibiting masked law enforcement is one small step towards ensuring the people wearing those badges are discharging their duties faithfully. I urge the Committee to support this bill.

Respectfully submitted,
Farnaz Edwards

TESTIMONY FOR HB0155.pdf

Uploaded by: Gita Lefstein

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable

HB 0155 – Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings

Judiciary Committee

February 20, 2026

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

My name is Gita Lefstein, and I am a resident of Baltimore County, Maryland. I am writing in support of HB0155, Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings.

When law enforcement officers are doing their job properly - respecting people's rights, treating people humanely, and following the law - they do not need to hide their identities. It is only when law enforcement officers are not following the law and not respecting people's rights that they feel the need to hide who they are. We should not be aiding law enforcement officers who are terrorizing people.

I respectfully urge you to issue a favorable report on HB0155.

Thank you.

Testimony on House Bill 0155 face masks.pdf

Uploaded by: GLENN PERRYMAN

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable

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

Judiciary Committee

20 February 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Dandy Bartlett, Vice Chair Debra Davis and Members of the Committee,

My name is Glenn Perryman, and I am writing in support of HB0155/SB0001 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.

ICE is not made safer by wearing masks. They are actually creating less safe conditions because the public isn't able to differentiate federal law enforcement from any other criminal who might don a mask.

That's why 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. Furthermore, community members are more likely to intervene if they watch someone being attacked or kidnapped by a masked, unmarked group. There's no way to know if someone is an ICE officer or if they are impersonating an ICE officer.

Our local law enforcement officers are easily identifiable. We should not be allowing armed individuals with masks to intimidate and frighten communities with impunity.

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.

Glenn Perryman

Hollywood, Maryland

HB 155 Prohibition on Face Coverings CCJR FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Heather Warnken

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 155

Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings

TO: Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Center for Criminal Justice Reform, University of Baltimore School of Law

DATE: February 20, 2026

The University of Baltimore School of Law’s Center for Criminal Justice Reform (“the Center”) is dedicated to supporting community-driven efforts to improve public safety and to address the harm and inequities caused by the criminal legal system. **The Center strongly supports House Bill 155.**

House Bill 155 is a valid exercise of Maryland’s police power that will promote public safety and improve relations between the police and the communities they serve. This bill would require the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to establish a statewide model policy that generally prohibits law enforcement officers from wearing face coverings while on duty and would require all law enforcement agencies in Maryland to adopt policies consistent with it. Critically, under the bill no law enforcement officer may wear a face covering while on duty in Maryland unless it is permitted under their agency’s policy. While prioritizing transparency, the bill also accounts for officer safety and religious garments by allowing face coverings in limited, clearly defined situations where they are genuinely necessary.

I. HB 155 promotes public safety.

A ban on law enforcement officers wearing of face coverings promotes public safety by reinforcing transparency, accountability, and public trust, which are foundational principles of effective community policing. When officers’ faces are visible, the public can readily verify their identity, reducing confusion, fear, and the danger of law enforcement impersonation. Masking provides little to no tactical law enforcement advantage and does not improve officer safety; rather, it can undermine it, especially when it reasonably exacerbates a community member’s fear. When officers’ faces are visible, the public is more likely to cooperate, which reduces conflict during encounters and allows officers to perform their duties more effectively and safely.

II. HB 155 is a valid exercise of Maryland’s police power and does not impermissibly interfere with or control the operations of federal law enforcement.

As Justice O’Connor explained in *Gonzales v. Raich*, “[t]he States’ core police powers have always included authority to define criminal law and to protect the health, safety, and welfare of their

citizens.” *See Gonzales v. Raich*, 545 U.S. 1, 42 (2005)(*dissenting*). This bill, which seeks to reduce conflict and promote trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve, falls squarely within the scope of this historic power.

The more salient constitutional question is whether the proposed ban on face coverings by law enforcement would violate the Constitution’s Supremacy Clause if it were applied to federal law enforcement acting within the state. *See U.S. Const. Article VI, Clause 2*. State law cannot unduly interfere with federal officials enforcing federal laws. *See Com. of Ky. v. Long*, 837 F.2d 727, 749 (6th Cir. 1988). However, not every state law that affects federal activity is an unconstitutional direct regulation. *See Texas v. United States Dep’t of Homeland Sec.*, 123 F.4th 186, 206 (5th Cir. 2024). In fact, “the key question is whether state law seeks to improperly control the employee’s federal duties, or whether the law only might affect incidentally the mode of carrying out the employment[.]” *Id.* (internal quotations omitted).

There is strong evidence to suggest HB 155 will only incidentally impact federal law enforcement responsibilities. Wearing face coverings is not essential to the ability to investigate, arrest, or enforce federal law. Indeed, as described above, the wearing of facemasks is generally counterproductive to effective law enforcement. There is, therefore, good reason to suggest that HB 155’s ban on face covering is legally applicable to both state and federal law enforcement actors. Additionally, should the unique circumstances of a particular situation require a federal law enforcement officer to mask, that officer would be shielded by supremacy clause immunity, which protects federal officials when their acts are both authorized by the laws of the United States and necessary and proper to the execution of his responsibilities. *See In re Neagle*, 135 U.S. 1, 75 (1890). While there is ample evidence that such masking is not “necessary and proper” in the vast majority of law enforcement operations, such protections ameliorate any concerns that this bill will inhibit legitimate federal law enforcement operations.

For these reasons, the Center for Criminal Justice Reform respectfully urges a favorable report on House Bill 155.

HB155 - ban LE face covering.pdf

Uploaded by: Holly Powell

Position: FAV

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. I am testifying in support of HB155 - 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.

Throughout 2025, we saw copious news coverage of federal law enforcement actions conducted by officers wearing street clothes and balaclavas. The fact that incidents of police impersonation have been on the rise in Maryland and nationally is not a coincidence: when it becomes impossible to determine who is a legitimate law enforcement officer, criminals can more plausibly claim to be police by simply putting on a mask, no fake uniform or badge required. Even the FBI has recognized the danger, circulating a bulletin to law enforcement agencies in October 2025 that warned criminals were taking advantage of routine mask-wearing by law enforcement to disguise themselves as ICE agents.¹ This confusion also makes routine law enforcement operations more dangerous. 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.

HB155 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 law enforcement agencies operating in Maryland to adopt that policy or its equivalent. 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 HB155, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Holly Powell

2308 Cambridge Street

Baltimore, Maryland 21224

Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

¹ Cameron, Dell & Haskins, Caroline, "FBI warns of criminals posing as ICE, urges agents to ID themselves." WIRED Magazine, Nov. 4, 2025. <https://www.wired.com/story/fbi-warns-of-criminals-posing-as-ice-urges-agents-to-id-themselves/>

SB 0001- Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers

Uploaded by: Ihemanma Ugo-Akwada

Position: FAV

February 20, 2026

Testimony on SB 001
Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings
Judiciary Committee

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland respectfully submits this testimony in support of SB 0001, which would require the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to develop a policy prohibiting certain law enforcement officers from wearing face coverings while performing their official duties in the State of Maryland, except when actively engaged in undercover operations.

Common Cause Maryland is committed to advancing civil rights, government accountability, and democratic integrity. Transparency between the public and those entrusted with governmental authority is a cornerstone of a functioning democracy. When law enforcement officers interact with civilians, clear identification is essential to maintaining public trust, ensuring accountability, and safeguarding constitutional principles.

In recent years, federal immigration enforcement operations have increasingly involved officers wearing masks and plain clothes during public interactions. Over 3,000 Maryland residents were detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement last year, approximately double the number from the prior year. In many cases, agents were not readily identifiable. These practices create fear, confusion, and uncertainty within communities and raise serious concerns about transparency and public safety.

Maryland law requires officers to display proper identification during stops, consistent with Section 2-109. While undercover operations warrant limited exceptions, routine enforcement activities conducted by masked officers undermine the spirit of that requirement. When individuals cannot verify the identity of those exercising state authority, it weakens accountability and increases the risk of impersonation or misconduct. Clear identification protects not only residents, but also legitimate law enforcement officers from impersonation and public mistrust.

For many Marylanders, particularly those from immigrant or minority communities, the prospect of being approached or detained by unidentified, masked agents is deeply alarming. The lack of visible identification erodes community confidence and strains the relationship between residents and government institutions.

Common Cause Maryland respectfully urges a favorable report on SB 0001 as it represents a reasonable and measured step to restore transparency, strengthen accountability, and reaffirm Maryland's commitment to protecting the rights and dignity of its residents.

Ban Face covering officials 20 FEB 2026.pdf

Uploaded by: Jan Kleinman

Position: FAV

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. As a student of history, I am keenly aware that masked officers have never been part of our American law enforcement system. Indeed, the transparency of American officials in self-identification has distinguished our system of justice from that of far less reliable governments around the world. **I am testifying in support of HB155 - 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.

Throughout 2025, we saw copious news coverage of federal law enforcement actions conducted by officers wearing street clothes and balaclavas. The fact that incidents of police impersonation have been on the rise in Maryland and nationally is not a coincidence: when it becomes impossible to determine who is a legitimate law enforcement officer, criminals can more plausibly claim to be police by simply putting on a mask, no fake uniform or badge required. Even the FBI has recognized the danger, circulating a bulletin to law enforcement agencies in October 2025 that warned criminals were taking advantage of routine mask-wearing by law enforcement to disguise themselves as ICE agents.¹ This confusion also makes routine law enforcement operations more dangerous. 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.

HB 155 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 law enforcement agencies operating in Maryland to adopt that policy or its equivalent. 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 HB155, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jan Kleinman

¹ Cameron, Dell & Haskins, Caroline, "FBI warns of criminals posing as ICE, urges agents to ID themselves." WIRED Magazine, Nov. 4, 2025. <https://www.wired.com/story/fbi-warns-of-criminals-posing-as-ice-urges-agents-to-id-themselves/>

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Baltimore, MD 21202
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

Testimony on House Bill 155 – Favorable - JCavanau

Uploaded by: Jean Cavanaugh

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill 155 – Favorable

HB155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings Judiciary Committee

February 20, 2026

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

My name is Jean Cavanaugh and I am writing in support of HB 155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.

It is unfathomable to me that federal employees from ICE and CBP, people whose salary I pay and whose behavior I expect to be legal, honorable and transparent, have been allowed to wear masks while perpetrating the worst violence against individuals in these United States.

I work at the polls every election. I do not wear a mask. The public I serve expects they can hold me accountable for any wrongdoing because I am identifiable. Many say working the polls is a dangerous job now. But because I know my behavior and actions will be beyond reproach, I am not afraid to show my face and wear ID.

With the proliferation of guns and private gun ownership in this country combined with this Administration's approval and unleashing of some of the more reprehensible people in our society, it is no wonder people are afraid when pulled over and/or attacked by heavily armed masked men/women who have no identification. It is terrifying to watch loved ones and neighbors being carried off by these unknown assailants - ICE and CBP officers.

I agree with Governor Moore when he says that Maryland cannot condone or be complicit with a federal armed force that doesn't uphold itself to the same human and constitutional rights and transparency we have here in Maryland.

Without visible identification and uniform standards, fear and public distrust in law enforcement increases. Masked, armed violent people roaming our communities have proven to be deadly to innocent civilians. Let's stop it here in Maryland.

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

Jean Cavanaugh

Frederick, MD

Montgomery HB155FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Jean Montgomery

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable

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

Judiciary Committee

February, 25, 2026

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

My name is Jean Montgomery and I am writing **in support of HB0155/SB0001** - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.

While I am presently a stay at home parent, when I worked, I did not wear a mask to hide my identity. If a colleague, client, student, or parent took issue with my actions, they would be able to identify who I was, utilizing my name, badge, and verifiable licensing number, issued by the state licensing board for my profession. Had I engaged in unethical, unprofessional, or unlawful conduct, a complaint could be issued to my licensing board and processes and procedures for holding me accountable for my actions would occur. If ever I wore a mask, it was when the child or client I was interacting with was medically fragile or we were undergoing a worldwide infectious pandemic and not wearing a mask would place the other person's health at risk. Under those circumstance, the masking was for health safety, I wore a name tag, and I was still identifiable and accountable to the individuals I was working with and serving. When you are confident that your actions are not harmful and your behavior towards fellow human beings is not deplorable, you know that there is no reason to hide behind a mask.

You know who does hide behind masks? Bank robbers, rapists, and other criminals who have the intent of escaping punishment for their actions. ICE isn't made safer by wearing masks. They are actually creating less safe conditions because the public isn't able to differentiate federal law enforcement from any other criminal who might don a mask.

That's why 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. Furthermore, community members are more likely to intervene if they watch someone being attacked or kidnapped by a masked, unmarked group. There's no way to know if someone is an ICE officer or if they are impersonating an ICE officer.

Our local law enforcement officers are easily identifiable. We should not be allowing armed individuals with masks to intimidate and frighten communities with impunity.

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.

Jean Montgomery.

Hess - HB 0155.pdf

Uploaded by: Jennifer Hess

Position: FAV

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 0155, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers -
Prohibition on Face Coverings**

Chair J. Sandy Bartlett & Members of the House Judiciary Committee

February 24, 2026

Chair Bartlett and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

My name is Jennifer Hess and I have lived in Silver Spring for almost 30 years. I am among a group of neighbors who last year formed North Woodside Civil Resistance out of concern for the threat to our democracy posed by the actions of the Trump administration. I'm writing to express my strong support for HB0155, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.

We are at a truly alarming moment in our country. There's been a lot of talk about what to call this administration's actions – authoritarianism, neo-royalism -- even fascism no longer seems a great stretch. Whatever the label, the elements are clear: unbridled military aggression, suppression of dissent, scapegoating of vulnerable groups, and celebration of violence.

A War Department pamphlet produced for U.S. Army personnel in WWII is troublingly relevant today. According to "Fascism!", produced in March 1945, the first technique fascists use to gain power in the U.S. is to break down national unity by a "well-planned 'hate campaign' against minority races, religions, and other groups." It's hard not to see this now, as masked, unaccountable thugs viciously attack our immigrant neighbors, all while slandering them as violent criminals and "the worst of the worst." Videos of brutal apprehensions are posted on governmental social media accounts, as if for entertainment.

Of course, there are limits to what any individual state can do to restrain the actions of the federal government, no matter how lawless. However, if we stand up for our Maryland values, for *American* values, we can throw sand in the gears of the repressive machine and inspire other states to do the same. Marylanders are taking a stand every day in the streets, parks, and highway overpasses all over the state, even as the Trump administration makes clear that peaceful protesters are also their targets. This body needs to demonstrate some of that same courage.

Unaccountable law enforcement is the essence of a police state. At a bare minimum, this body should insist that those empowered to detain individuals in our state publicly identify themselves. There is no room for masked gunmen doing the government's bidding in a democracy.

HB0155 properly demands that law enforcement *not* wear masks. I would argue the bill should go further and require that all security forces operating in the state *clearly identify themselves by name, number, and agency*. There is simply no room for a secret police force in a democracy.

In addition to the troubling lack of accountability that masked officers represent, they also constitute a grave danger to public security. Criminal impersonation of law enforcement officers is a rising trend, as we became acutely aware last year with the murder of a Minnesota lawmaker and her husband and the shooting of another and his wife by an individual dressed as a police officer.

Public safety is best served when individuals can more quickly and clearly verify officers' identity, not the other way around. Maryland law must make clear that masked, unidentified individuals with guns are operating outside the law. I believe that HB 0155 is a step in the right direction toward achieving these goals. Thank you for your consideration.

Jennifer Hess
1910 Luzerne Ave.
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Jenny.c.hess@outlook.com

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Jennifer Makar

Position: FAV

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

Judiciary Committee

19FEB26

Dear Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Jen Makar and I am writing in support of SB0001 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.

When I conduct business, I do not wear a mask to hide my identity. If I engage with a neighbor, I do not wear a mask. In nearly all professional settings and especially those that involve the law and public interest, hiding identities not only is inappropriate but puts individuals at risk. Generally when you are acting in accordance with your duties or proud of the work you conduct, you know that there is no reason to hide behind a mask. ICE isn't made safer by wearing masks and the public they are meant to serve certainly are not made safer either. ICE using face coverings is actually creating less safe conditions because the public isn't able to differentiate federal law enforcement from a general criminal or someone with intent to do harm, who might don a mask.

That's why 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. Furthermore, community members are more likely to intervene if they watch someone being attacked or kidnapped by a masked, unmarked group. There's no way to know if someone is an ICE officer or if they are impersonating an ICE officer.

Our local law enforcement officers are easily identifiable. We should not be allowing armed individuals with masks to intimidate and frighten communities with impunity.

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.

HB155.pdf

Uploaded by: Jessica Winder

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable

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

Judiciary Committee

2/20/2026

Dear Honorable Chair Williams, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jessica Winder and I am writing in support of HB0155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.

When I report into work, I do not wear a mask to hide my identity. If a colleague or customer I interact with has any issues with my actions, they will be able to clearly identify who I am. When you are confident that your actions are not harmful and your behavior towards fellow human beings is not deplorable, you know that there is no reason to hide behind a mask.

Criminals, such as bank robbers, who have the intent of escaping punishment for their actions are the ones who hide behind masks. ICE isn't made safer by wearing masks, but are actually creating decreased safe conditions because the public isn't able to differentiate federal law enforcement from any other criminal who might don a mask.

That's why 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. Furthermore, community members are more likely to intervene if they watch someone being attacked or kidnapped by a masked, unmarked group. There's no way to know if someone is an ICE officer or if they are impersonating an ICE officer.

Our local law enforcement officers are easily identifiable. We should not be allowing armed individuals with masks to intimidate and frighten communities with impunity.

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.

Sincerely, Jessica Winder

Testimony- Support- HB 155-Face Coverings- UULM-M

Uploaded by: Jim Caldiero

Position: FAV



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony IN FAVOR of HB 155

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

DATE: February 24, 2026

TO: Del. J. Sandy Bartlett, Chair, Del. Debra Davis, Vice Chair, and
Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Jim Caldiero, Lead Advocate for Immigration,
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony IN FAVOR of **HB 155, Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings** that will establish a model policy prohibiting the use of a face covering by a law enforcement officer in the course of duty.

As a child growing up in New York City in the late 1940's and early 1950's, I would watch *Officer Joe Bolton* on WPIX-TV as he introduced various children's programs. He was an avuncular, friendly face, much like the real policemen who walked the beat. In the playgrounds, on the streets, on your way to school, you knew you were safe as they offered comforting smiles, but you knew they'd tell your mom if you didn't behave.

You could trust these police officers.

Their *faces* told you so.

Today, however, instead of trust, fear pervades every immigrant community as strong-armed, unaccountable, unidentifiable Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents roam the streets, abducting individuals, throwing them into unmarked vans, separating parents from their children. Some states, like California, New York, and Massachusetts, have already recognized the dysfunction unidentifiable federal agents present, the fear and mistrust they engender, the abuse of power that can come when hiding behind a mask, and are working on legislation to protect their citizens. For example:

- CA: No Secret Police Act;
- NY: Mandating End of Lawless Tactics (MELT) Act;
- MA: Ensuring Law Enforcement Identification and Public Trust Act.

UULM-MD c/o UU Church of Annapolis 333 Dubois Road Annapolis, MD 21401 410-266-8044,

www.uulmmd.org info@uulmmd.org www.facebook.com/uulmmd [www.Twitter.com/uulmmd](https://www.twitter.com/uulmmd)

In addition to community trust and reducing fear, there are other reasons to ensure that all law enforcement officers are clearly identifiable.

They include:

- *Public Safety*: Identifiable law enforcement officers can prevent potential misunderstandings between agents and the public, which can lead to violent encounters as we recently witnessed in Minneapolis.
- *Due Process*: Identifiable law enforcement officers can uphold the right to due process and prevent wrongful detention. Face coverings can deter immigrants from seeking legal assistance or reporting violations as they may fear for their safety.
- *Prevention of Impersonation*: Identifiable law enforcement officers prevent the misuse of information and potential vigilantism.

As former ICE Assistant Director, Scott Schuchart, said, “If somebody comes up to you with a mask and a T-shirt and no badge, why would you think that they are exercising a legitimate authority, as opposed to being a violent criminal trying to do you harm? How do you know that you need to not resist to avoid arrest, as opposed to resist arrest to possibly survive the encounter?”

My Unitarian Universalist faith calls me to promote and affirm justice, equity, and compassion as we relate to each other. Faith that our law enforcement officers will do the right thing, not fear, should guide us. We should not turn our neighbors into suspects. We must restore trust between law enforcement officers and all our Maryland communities.

I encourage you to vote IN FAVOR on HB 155.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sources:

California:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/20/us/california-ice-agents-masks-law.html>

<https://trackbill.com/bill/california-senate-bill-627-law-enforcement-masks/2670575/>

New York:

<https://www.nysenate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2025/patricia-fahy/senator-fahy-introduces-melt-act-prohibit-masking-ice>

Massachusetts:

<https://www.masslive.com/news/2025/07/mass-lawmakers-bill-would-ban-ice-agents-from-wearing-masks.html>

Scott Schuchart:

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-07-07/masking-of-federal-agents-very-dangerous-and-perfectly-legal>

Reasons for Unmasking ICE Agents:

<https://www.salon.com/2025/07/19/it-comes-across-as-kidnapping-pressure-grows-to-unmask-ice/>

UULM-MD c/o UU Church of Annapolis 333 Dubois Road Annapolis, MD 21401 410-266-8044,

www.uulmmd.org info@uulmmd.org www.facebook.com/uulmmd www.Twitter.com/uulmmd

HB155 - favorable - John Ford.pdf

Uploaded by: John Ford

Position: FAV

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, a resident of Baltimore, community association board member, workforce development civil servant, and organizational psychology practitioner. I am testifying in support of HB155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.**

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.

Throughout 2025, we saw copious news coverage of federal law enforcement actions conducted by officers wearing street clothes and balaclavas. The fact that incidents of police impersonation have been on the rise in Maryland and nationally is not a coincidence: when it becomes impossible to determine who is a legitimate law enforcement officer, criminals can more plausibly claim to be police by simply putting on a mask, no fake uniform or badge required. Even the FBI has recognized the danger, circulating a bulletin to law enforcement agencies in October 2025 that warned criminals were taking advantage of routine mask-wearing by law enforcement to disguise themselves as ICE agents.¹ This confusion also makes routine law enforcement operations more dangerous. 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.

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 law enforcement agencies operating in Maryland to adopt that policy or its equivalent. 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. Recent court challenges in California have centered on discriminating between state and federal LEOs in their masking ability, and so this bill targeting law enforcement generally is a worthwhile new challenge to federal overreach. It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB1551, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

John Preston Ford

529 S East Ave, Baltimore, MD 21224

¹ Cameron, Dell & Haskins, Caroline, "FBI warns of criminals posing as ICE, urges agents to ID themselves." WIRED Magazine, Nov. 4, 2025. <https://www.wired.com/story/fbi-warns-of-criminals-posing-as-ice-urges-agents-to-id-themselves/>

House Bill 155 Favorable One Pasadena 2026.pdf

Uploaded by: John Jasen

Position: FAV

House Bill 155
Judiciary Committee
Favorable Report

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Judiciary Committee;

We, the Steering Committee of the neighborhood group One Pasadena: Building a Safe and Inclusive Community, urge you to give House Bill 155 a favorable report.

Without the ability to identify law enforcement officers, people cannot exercise their Constitutional rights. People who wear face coverings to hide their identities can claim that they're law enforcement, even when they're not. We need to be able to depend on law enforcement to not hide their identities. Without a way to verify who they are, we are left helpless. If we resist, as many of us would against an unknown assailant, we could be found guilty of a number of crimes against law enforcement. If we don't resist, we could find ourselves abducted, raped, and even killed. If we make it to court, we wouldn't be able to identify any individual who has harmed us. We also couldn't argue that they have demonstrated a trend of unlawful discrimination in their actions.

For these, and many other reasons, we hope that you will give House Bill 155 a favorable report. Thank you.

Sincerely,
The One Pasadena Steering Committee
Pasadena, MD

HB0155_Testimony_2-24-26_js.pdf

Uploaded by: Joyce Sims

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill - **Favorable**

HB0155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings

Judiciary Committee

February 24, 2026

My name is Joyce Sims and I appreciate this opportunity to offer comments in support of **HB0155** prohibiting the current practice by federal immigration agents of masking their identity when stopping and detaining people.

While I understand there may be a need for police to shield their identity when operating undercover, the standard for law enforcement is to be clearly identifiable in order to assure basic public safety. Without visible identification and uniform standards, we have no way to know who is stopping us. Even if they are federal agents, there is no way to hold them accountable for excessive force or other harm done, and so they act with impunity. As we have seen, it's been a recipe for disaster.

In August of 2008, I was driving through Annapolis to work, when I saw a man chasing a woman along the side of the road. She was screaming and crying; he was shouting at her to stop. I slowed as we got closer, stopped my car, opened the passenger door and shouted for her to get in. She did, pulling the door shut as we took off and drove to the city police department. I thought it might have been a domestic incident, but she said she had no idea who he was and that he had a knife. Fortunately, he was apprehended very quickly. I tell you this because my actions would have been very different had he been wearing a police uniform with a badge. I probably would have pulled to a place of safety to observe.

The point is that masked people wearing fatigues and carrying guns inspire fear and reaction from people targeted and those observing. The mask and lack of identification heightens those responses. Lack of accountability rightfully inspires defiance and lack of cooperation from the public.

I urge your vote in **favor of HB0155** to support transparency and safety for the people of Maryland. Thank you.

Joyce Sims
Mechanicsville MD

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 0155.pdf

Uploaded by: Judy Karasik

Position: FAV

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 0155, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition
on Face Coverings**

Chair J. Sandy Bartlett & Members of the House Judiciary Committee

February 20, 2026

My name is Judy Karasik and I reside at 2016 Luzerne Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20910. I have lived in Silver Spring since 2001 and, earlier, resided in Chevy Chase from 1958 to 1971. I am a registered voter and American citizen.

I write to express my strong support for HB0155, which demands that law enforcement *not* wear masks (with the practical exceptions noted in the language of the bill).

The horror and terror that we have seen with ICE enforcers both here and elsewhere is seen most clearly in their use of masks, disguising themselves to ensure total lack of accountability. In addition -- and this is a problem unfortunately *not* addressed in HB0155 -- these enforcers do not identify themselves by name, number, and agency -- unlike local and state police.

Residents are grabbed on the street and in their homes and whisked away by groups of anonymous strongmen. Secret police. *This is America?*

In addition, how can the public know if these people are real police officers or criminals impersonating police officers? Criminal impersonation of law enforcement officers is a rising trend, as we became acutely aware last year with the murder of a Minnesota lawmaker and her husband and the shooting of another and his wife by an individual dressed as a police officer.

This practice is incompatible with the standards of our democracy. In addition, it naturally and inevitably increases the public's suspicion of all law enforcement professionals, weakening the community ties that responsible state and local police work so hard to establish and maintain.

HB0155 properly demands that law enforcement *not* wear masks. However, **for every reason described above, the bill should also require that all security forces operating in the state should *clearly identify themselves by name, number, and agency.***

Maryland law must make clear that masked, unidentified individuals with guns are operating outside the law. HB0155 is a step in the right direction toward achieving these goals. Thank you for your consideration.

HB155 - Face Coverings.pdf

Uploaded by: Juliet Brown

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable

HB155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings Judiciary Committee

Feb. 20, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Juliet Brown, a Maryland resident, and I am writing in support of SB0001 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.

When I report into work, I do not wear a mask to hide my identity. If a colleague or customer I interact with has any issues with my actions, they will be able to clearly identify who I am. Heck, I'll even give them my name. When you are confident that your actions are not harmful and your behavior towards fellow human beings is not deplorable, you know that there is no reason to hide behind a mask.

I would be very afraid if someone approached me in a mask. I know that the “bad guys” like bank robbers, rapists, and other criminals are the ones who wear masks, which is to escape identification and punishment for their actions. ICE isn't made safer by wearing masks. They are actually creating less safe conditions because the public isn't able to differentiate federal law enforcement from any other criminal who might don a mask.

That's why 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. Furthermore, community members are more likely to intervene if they watch someone being attacked or kidnapped by a masked, unmarked group. There's no way to know if someone is an ICE officer or if they are impersonating an ICE officer.

Our local law enforcement officers are easily identifiable. We should not be allowing armed individuals with masks to intimidate and frighten communities with impunity.

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.

Juliet Brown

HB155.pdf

Uploaded by: karen Christof

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill 155 – Favorable
HB 0155 – Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

House Judiciary Committee

February 20, 2026

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

I offer favorable testimony in support of HB 0155 – Prohibition on Face Coverings for Law Enforcement.

My name is Karen Christof and I am writing in support of HB0155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

Public safety demands that CE & CBP be clearly identified. How else should someone know if the person who is approaching them is truly a law enforcement officer and not someone impersonating an ICE officer intending to rob or attack them. We've always been told to drive to a safe spot before stopping if you are being pulled over by a police car with lights. How is this any different? The person has a right to be certain that the person stopping them on the street, in their homes, on the road is a legitimate officer of the law. Wearing masks protects the ICE officer but their job is to protect the innocent and arrest the criminals. That is not what masked men are doing.

Without visible identification and uniform standards, fear and public distrust in law enforcement increases. That makes our communities less safe. Armed and poorly trained individuals should not be permitted to hide behind masks to intimidate & frighten our friends, families, neighbors and community businesses.

I ask that you vote in favor of HB0155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings for transparency and safety.

Thank you for your consideration.

NASW Maryland - 2026 HB 155 FAV - Prohibition on F

Uploaded by: Karessa Proctor

Position: FAV



**House Judiciary Committee
February 24, 2026**

**House Bill 155: Judicial Proceedings – Law Enforcement Officers –
Prohibition on Face Coverings**

POSITION: SUPPORT

The National Association of Social Workers – Maryland Chapter (NASW-MD), representing licensed social workers across the State of Maryland, respectfully submits this testimony in support of House Bill 155, legislation that would prohibit law enforcement officers from wearing face coverings while performing official duties.

NASW-MD’s support for this bill is firmly grounded in the NASW Code of Ethics, which establishes the ethical responsibilities of social workers to promote human dignity, social justice, integrity, and the importance of human relationships. These values are essential to the creation of public systems that are transparent, accountable, and responsive to community needs.

The NASW Code of Ethics affirms the dignity and worth of the person and emphasizes that all individuals have the right to be treated with respect and fairness. The presence of law enforcement officers wearing face coverings while exercising state authority undermines this principle by creating fear, anxiety, and intimidation among community members. Such practices are especially harmful to vulnerable and marginalized populations, including children, older adults, individuals with disabilities, immigrants, and communities that have historically experienced disproportionate policing.

The Code of Ethics further underscores the importance of human relationships, recognizing trust as a cornerstone of effective social systems and community safety. Visible identification of law enforcement officers is a critical component of establishing trust, facilitating communication, and promoting accountability. Face coverings erode these relationships by obscuring identity, limiting nonverbal communication, and reducing perceived responsibility for conduct.

NASW-MD is also guided by the ethical principle of social justice, which compels social workers to challenge policies and practices that contribute to oppression, fear, or harm. Anonymous policing tactics have been shown to escalate tensions, discourage community cooperation, and weaken public confidence in law enforcement institutions. These outcomes are inconsistent with ethical governance and trauma-informed community engagement.

(over)

House Bill 155 appropriately directs the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to develop a model policy prohibiting face coverings during the course of duty. This approach promotes statewide consistency while reinforcing ethical standards of transparency and accountability, without impeding legitimate public safety functions already addressed through existing policies and exceptions.

NASW-MD believes this legislation represents an important step toward strengthening trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve, in alignment with ethical principles that prioritize human dignity, relationship-building, and community well-being.

For these reasons, the National Association of Social Workers – Maryland Chapter urges the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 155 and advance it to the full Senate for consideration.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Philip A. Pratt, BSW, MSW, ACSW
NASW-MD Chapter President

Karessa Proctor, BSW, MSW
Executive Director: Maryland, Metro DC, Delaware Chapters
National Association of Social Workers

HB 155 JUD D4CC fav.pdf

Uploaded by: Kate Sugarman

Position: FAV



Testimony on HB 155 - Favorable

HB 155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

House Judiciary Committee

February 24, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Bartlett, and Members of the Committee,

Doctors for Camp Closure Maryland chapter offers favorable testimony in support of HB155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.

Doctors for Camp Closure is a group who advocates for humane and just treatment for immigrants and is very opposed to ICE detention for our immigrant community.

This bill is about upholding Maryland's values—fairness, dignity, and justice for all. This bill affirms that our state should not be in the business of terrorizing families and individuals, undermining public trust, and allowing state, local, and federal law enforcement to hide behind masks. Instead, Maryland should remain focused on community safety by prohibiting law enforcement officials from using masks solely to hide their identity.

Our immigrant community is under siege by federal government actions. Places in Montgomery County that used to bustle are empty and quiet because immigrants (and some who might be perceived as immigrants) are afraid to venture out for fear of a chance encounter with federal officials or local law enforcement. Immigrants are having food delivered by local mutual aid groups, getting others to take their children to school (or keeping them home), setting up Standby Guardianship for their children in case the parents are detained or deported, and even afraid to answer their phones or open their door to anyone they do not know.

We see how ICE actions have a negative impact on the health of our immigrant patients. Allowing ICE and law enforcement to hide behind face masks, increases the terror of law enforcement encounters. Distrust leads immigrants to not report crimes or serve as witnesses,

which makes all of us less safe. And that distrust of engaging with law enforcement makes our patients so fearful, that they neglect their health out of fear of deportation. I just witnessed 3 young children lose their parents to an ICE raid in Maryland. These children are severely suffering emotionally, physically and financially.

Our mission is to promote good mental and physical health for our patients, while ICE actions including hiding behind masks, has a damaging effect on their health.

Thus it is vital that the State promote the safety of all and minimize the risks immigrants face by prohibiting law enforcement from using masks to hide behind.

As part of the Maryland Immigrant Justice Table, along with CASA, we support a clean bill which will increase safety for all of us by prohibiting law enforcement at all levels from using masks to hide their identity. This is what will bring Maryland closer to our values.

Doctors for Camp Closure Maryland urges the committee to provide a favorable report on HB 155.

Kate Sugarman, MD

Doctors for Camp Closure co leader

Potomac MD

Testimony in Support of SB1 HB155_Blaha_SURJ.pdf

Uploaded by: Katherine Blaha

Position: FAV

Friday, February 20, 2026



Showing Up for Racial Justice

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,,

I am submitting this testimony as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore, a group of Marylanders working to mobilize white people in 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 de Maryland, an immigration advocacy and assistance organization based in Maryland. I am testifying in **support of HB155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.**

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.

Throughout 2025, we saw alarming and abundant incidents of federal law enforcement actions conducted by officers wearing street clothes and balaclavas or other face coverings, clearly obscuring their identities and the agencies under which they were operating. Simultaneously, incidents of police impersonation have been on the rise in Maryland and nationally. This is not a coincidence: without requiring law enforcement officials to clearly identify themselves, it becomes impossible to determine who is a legitimate law enforcement officer and criminals can more easily and plausibly claim to be police by simply putting on a mask. Even the FBI has recognized this danger, circulating a bulletin to law enforcement agencies in October 2025 that warned that criminals were taking

advantage of routine mask-wearing by law enforcement to disguise themselves as ICE agents.¹

Trust between law enforcement and the communities is crucial for law enforcement to be able to do its job. Failure to enforce clear identification of law enforcement and creating easy opportunities for criminals to impersonate law enforcement endangers the public, undermines the public's trust in actual law enforcement, and fosters a sense of fear in communities everywhere.

In addition to endangering civilians everywhere, this confusion makes routine law enforcement operations more dangerous. Initial contact between an officer and a civilian is often the most uncertain and dangerous moment in a law enforcement encounter. Ensuring that everyone is informed about what is happening and who is involved can help prevent rash and dangerous decisions.

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. It would also require law enforcement agencies operating in Maryland to adopt that policy or its equivalent. Officers would still be permitted to wear necessary tactical and safety equipment, and full face masks could be authorized under specific, defined circumstances. 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 HB155, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Dr. Katherine Blaha
Baltimore, MD
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore

¹ Cameron, Dell & Haskins, Caroline, "FBI warns of criminals posing as ICE, urges agents to ID themselves." WIRED Magazine, Nov. 4, 2025. <https://www.wired.com/story/fbi-warns-of-criminals-posing-as-ice-urges-agents-to-id-themselves/>

Testimony HB 155 2 24 26.pdf

Uploaded by: Kathy Shulman

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable

HB155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings Judiciary Committee

February 24, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair, Delegate Sandy Bartlett, Vice Chair, Delegate Debra Davis, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kathy Shulman, and I am writing **in support of SB0001 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.**

I am writing as a resident of Baltimore City (District 43) and as a volunteer leader of Indivisible Baltimore.

Trust is the most effective ingredient in creating effective local, state, and federal law enforcement. When members of the community and law enforcement know each other and form trust, this makes our communities safer. When you know a member of law enforcement and see that they care about your community, law enforcement officials are seen as assets in their community.

When anyone patrolling community streets is shielded by a mask, trust is lost. When ICE or any law enforcement agents are wearing masks, they are creating less safe conditions because no ongoing relationships are formed and trust is not created.

That's why 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. Furthermore, community members are more likely to intervene if they watch someone being attacked or kidnapped by a masked, unmarked group. There's no way to know if someone is an ICE officer or if they are impersonating an ICE officer.

Our local law enforcement officers are easily identifiable. We should not be allowing armed individuals with masks to intimidate and frighten communities with impunity.

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

Sincerely,

Kathy Shulman, Co-Lead, Immigration Rights Working Group of Indivisible Baltimore
221 Stony Run Lane, Apt. G1, Baltimore, MD 21210; kathyshulman@proton.me

Indivisible Baltimore is a unified coalition of diverse Baltimore residents who aim to connect, build, and support our community to uphold democracy, justice, and human dignity. We hold local, state and national leaders accountable, protecting the vulnerable, and strengthening democratic participation. Through empathy, education, and nonviolent resistance, we build bridges across political and social divides—because real change happens when we listen, learn, and act together. To date, we represent more than 2300 Baltimore City residents.

MD HB 155_NPAP_FAV (Face Coverings).pdf

Uploaded by: Keisha James

Position: FAV



SUPPORT - HB 155

Written Testimony of National Lawyers Guild-National Police Accountability Project, Keisha James, Staff Attorney
House Judiciary Committee – Tuesday, February 24, 2026

Dear Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comment on this important issue. The National Lawyers Guild National Police Accountability Project (“NPAP”) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to holding law enforcement officers accountable to constitutional and professional standards. We urge you to give a favorable review to HB 155, which requires the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to create a model policy prohibiting law enforcement officers from covering their faces while carrying out their duties. HB 155 would apply to *all* law enforcement agencies with officers operating in Maryland. This bill is a critical measure to ensure accountability and transparency in policing, particularly given the extraordinary powers entrusted to law enforcement officers.¹

Law enforcement officers possess immense and unique authority to interrogate, detain, and arrest individuals, and to carry weapons they can use to threaten or end an individual’s life. In a democratic society, those who wield such state-sanctioned power must be accountable to the public. Civilians have a fundamental right to know who is exercising that power in their community. But accountability is fundamentally undermined when law enforcement officers carry out their duties anonymously.

The cover of anonymity empowers law enforcement officers to move through communities with impunity. In situations where law enforcement officers obscure their faces with balaclavas, ski masks, gaiters, or other types of masks, Maryland residents have neither the ability to identify or report instances of misconduct nor take further recourse if their rights are violated. Permitting law enforcement officers to execute their duties under a blanket of anonymity corrodes public trust in law enforcement, especially at a time when only a slim majority of adults in the United States express confidence in police.² Waning public trust in law enforcement negatively affects law enforcement efforts. If communities do not trust law enforcement, they are less likely to call for help, report crimes, or cooperate

¹ See President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, Final Report, OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES 1 (May 2015) (“Law enforcement agencies should also establish a culture of transparency and accountability to build public trust and legitimacy.”).

² Gallup News Service: June 3-23, 2024 – June Wave 1, Final Topline, GALLUP (June 3-23, 2024), https://news.gallup.com/file/poll/647321/2024_07_15_Confidence%20Institutions.pdf.



in investigations.³ Further, community distrust in police can lead to civil unrest which, in turn, may result in a violent police response, which breeds even more distrust and unrest in the community.⁴

Moreover, when law enforcement officers are permitted to obscure their identities, there is a higher risk that bad actors will impersonate law enforcement, further contributing to a degradation of public trust and safety.⁵ It is difficult for members of the public to discern sworn law enforcement from impersonators “particularly when [they are] wearing plain clothes and no visible marker of identity.”⁶ The result is “fear and panic across communities” as people react to masked individuals trying to do harm.⁷ The United States has a history of adopting anti-masking statutes to prevent bad actors from concealing their identities while perpetrating these harms.⁸ The majority of anti-masking statutes originated in the twentieth century, particularly in response to preventing Ku Klux Klansmen from “concealing their identities while terrorizing their communities.”⁹

Over the last year, masked Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”) officers and other federal agents have descended on towns and cities, stoking fear and amplifying anxiety in communities across the country, including in Maryland.¹⁰ The status quo

³ See Katherine J. Bies, *Let the Sunshine In: Illuminating the Powerful Role Police Unions Play in Shielding Officer Misconduct*, 28 STAN. L. & POL’Y REV. 109, 118–19 (2017) (“Accountable and transparent decision-making is imperative because police officers play a unique role in society: the state sanctioned ability to use force against other citizens. Both police departments and individual officers should be held publicly accountable for the manner in which they perform their official duties . . . Greater transparency also allows the public to determine whether police departments and individuals are treating people with respect and fairness.”). *But see* Sunita Patel, *Toward Democratic Police Reform: A Vision for “Community Engagement Provisions in DOJ Consent Decrees*, 51 WAKE FOREST L. REV. 793, 802 (2016) (“[W]hen police processes are perceived as procedurally just, communities are more likely to cooperate with the police, and policing, in turn, is more effective.”).

⁴ See, e.g., Cynthia Conti-Cook, *A New Balance: Weighing Harms of Hiding Police Misconduct Information from the Public*, 22 CUNY L. REV. 148, 158 (2019) (“The deflections, delays, and denials of responsibility for police violence cause more unrest and distrust.”).

⁵ Philip Bump, *A Dangerous New Factor in An Uneasy Moment: Unidentified Law Enforcement Officers*, THE WASHINGTON POST (June 4, 2020), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/06/03/dangerous-new-factor-an-uneasy-moment-unidentified-law-enforcement-officers/>.

⁶ Jenny Jarvie, *ICE Agents Wearing Masks Add New Levels of Intimidation, Confusion During L.A. Raids*, Los Angeles Times (July 7, 2025), <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-07-07/masking-of-federal-agents-very-dangerous-and-perfectly-legal>.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ See, e.g., Nicholas Dougherty, *Anti-Masking Statutes and Anonymous Protest in the Age of Surveillance*, 18 SEATTLE J. FOR SOC. JUST. 275, 275–77, 283–84 (2020).

⁹ *Id.* at 283.

¹⁰ Leila Fadel, et al., *Masked Immigration Agents are Spurring Fear and Confusion Across the U.S.*, NPR (July 10, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/07/09/nx-s1-5440311/ice-raids-masked-agents>; Nicole Pilsbury, *More than*



presents a double standard: while anti-masking statutes aid law enforcement officers in identifying civilians who have perpetuated violence, those same officers can conceal their own identities while engaged in misconduct, disempowering communities from seeking accountability and protection from abuses of power. While officials argue that masking is necessary to protect law enforcement from doxxing, allowing them to hide their faces from the public prioritizes shielding law enforcement from accountability over the safety and security of the community members law enforcement agencies purport to serve.

We urge you to support transparency in policing and give HB 155 a favorable review. I am happy to answer any questions you may have. You can contact me at keisha.npap@nlg.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Keisha James', written over a white background.

Keisha James
National Police Accountability Project

3,300 Marylanders were detained by ICE in 2025, twice the number of preceding years, Maryland Matters (Jan. 11, 2026), <https://marylandmatters.org/2026/01/11/more-than-3300-marylanders-were-detained-by-ice-in-2025-twice-the-number-of-preceding-years/>; Kate Amara and Khiree Stewart, *'It scares me': Marylanders protesting as data shows ICE arrests nearly tripled in 2025*, WBAL (Jan. 12, 2026), <https://www.wbaltv.com/article/marylanders-protesting-data-ice-arrests-nearly-tripled-2025/69980610> (“A new batch of data shows ICE has increased enforcement action across Maryland.”).

Testimony on House Bill 155-FAVORABLE.pdf

Uploaded by: Laurie Liskin

Position: FAV



**Testimony on House Bill 155 – Favorable
HB155-Public Safety-Law Enforcement Officers-Prohibitions on Face Coverings
House Judiciary Committee
February 23, 2026**

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

Indivisible Howard County offers favorable testimony in support of **HB155-Public Safety-Law Enforcement Officers -Prohibitions on Face Coverings**.

Established in 2017 as part of the national Indivisible movement, Indivisible Howard County has more than 1,700 members focused on making our state safe, equitable, and welcoming for all residents. There are 49 Indivisible chapters in Maryland and over 2,500 nationwide.

HB155- Public Safety-Law-Enforcement Officers-Prohibitions on Face Covering will require **all** law enforcement officers working in Maryland to keep their faces uncovered except for certain circumstances. Maryland and many other states already require law enforcement officers to keep their faces uncovered and to identify their name and agency. There are sound reasons for these laws. Transparency increases community collaboration with law enforcement, holds officers accountable, and helps deescalate potential violence. These laws should apply to ICE agents as well as local law enforcement.

Masking sows fear and mistrust in the community. It allows criminals and other bad actors to impersonate ICE agents—three such cases have been reported in Maryland. This makes legitimate law enforcement more difficult. It undermines the rule of law and terrorizes citizens and immigrants alike. ICE agents should not be above the law. Our communities should not live in fear.

Indivisible Howard County urges the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue **a favorable report on HB155**.

Laurie Liskin, on behalf of Indivisible HoCoMD
Ellicott City, Maryland 21042

HB155 FAVORABLE-Lia Nigro.pdf

Uploaded by: Lia Nigro

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable

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

February 24, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony IN FAVOR of HB155, which will restrict face mask use by law enforcement in Maryland.

My name is Lia Nigro. I am a resident of Columbia, MD, and a volunteer with Indivisible Howard County. In that capacity, this past July I conducted research related to anti-masking legislation efforts and related concerns. This research strengthened my instinctive belief that it is vital to see the faces of those enforcing the law (and terrifying not to). Here is some background on why restricting masking to cases in which it is necessary for health or safety is important for law enforcement and the public:

- Masking is psychologically associated with criminals. Use of masks could endanger law enforcement officers if an armed citizen, reacting quickly in a stressful situation, takes officers for criminals. This is a more immediate and likely risk than doxing, which is a non-immediate threat with protection offered by numerous federal and state laws against harassment and cyberstalking.
- Anonymity has been shown to reduce a person's sense of accountability, and to increase the chance of rogue behavior. Maryland has strong and admirable requirements for officers to identify themselves immediately but showing one's face is a basic element contributing to interacting in a civilized way with other human beings.
- Being able to see that officers of the law are in fact fellow human beings decreases fear and confusion among citizens and increases trust in law enforcement.
- If law enforcement does not use masks, that decreases opportunity for imposture by criminals and vigilantes (a threat on the rise around the country), and allows those victimized by such imposters to identify their victimizers.

Please vote IN FAVOR of HB155. Thank you for your consideration.

Additional Background:

No One Can Tell Who's a Cop Anymore. New York Magazine, 2025

<https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/trump-immigration-ice-agents-masks-criminal-imposters.html>

Masked Federal Agents Undermine the Rule of Law. Human Rights Watch,
2025 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/12/18/us-masked-federal-agents-undermine-rule-of-law>

Who Is That? The Study of Anonymity and Behavior. Association for Psychological Science,
2018 <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/who-is-that-the-study-of-anonymity-and-behavior>

HB155 - ban LE face covering.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Lindsay Keipper

Position: FAV

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, I am testifying in support of HB155 - 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.

Throughout 2025, we saw copious news coverage of federal law enforcement actions conducted by officers wearing street clothes and balaclavas. The fact that incidents of police impersonation have been on the rise in Maryland and nationally is not a coincidence: when it becomes impossible to determine who is a legitimate law enforcement officer, criminals can more plausibly claim to be police by simply putting on a mask, no fake uniform or badge required. Even the FBI has recognized the danger, circulating a bulletin to law enforcement agencies in October 2025 that warned criminals were taking advantage of routine mask-wearing by law enforcement to disguise themselves as ICE agents.¹ This confusion also makes routine law enforcement operations more dangerous. 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.

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 law enforcement agencies operating in Maryland to adopt that policy or its equivalent. 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 HB1551, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Keipper
2425 Fleet St.
Baltimore, MD

Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

¹ Cameron, Dell & Haskins, Caroline, "FBI warns of criminals posing as ICE, urges agents to ID themselves." WIRED Magazine, Nov. 4, 2025.
<https://www.wired.com/story/fbi-warns-of-criminals-posing-as-ice-urges-agents-to-id-themselves/>

testimony FOR HB155 Girdner.pdf

Uploaded by: Linnie Girdner

Position: FAV

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

TESTIMONY FOR HB0155_unmasking.pdf

Uploaded by: Liz Enagonio

Position: FAV



Admin Team
Email: info@ibbmd.org
Liz Enagonio
Jasmine Gollup
Amy Stevens
Carriann Petersen

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.

HB155, FAV, Judiciary.pdf

Uploaded by: Lore Rosenthal

Position: FAV

Lore Lyon Rosenthal
2 Gardenway, Unit R
Greenbelt, MD 20770
301-345-2234H
SimplicityGroupsMD@gmail.com

Committee: Judiciary

Testimony on: HB155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

Organization: Individual

Person Submitting: Lore Lyon Rosenthal

Position: favorable

Hearing Date: Feb 24, 2026

Dear Chairwoman Bartlett and members of the committee,

I am writing in favor of HB155- Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

I find it appalling that ICE officers feel the need to cover their faces while carrying out their duties. Their identity should be fully revealed in the same manner as the person being detained. Their agency, name, and badge number should also be revealed,

They should not hide their identify, neither should they be embarrassed by what they are being asked to do. [Senator Mark Kelly has already reminded all military that it is illegal to follow a superior officer's command if it is against the law.] If what they are doing is illegal, they should stop.

This is very intimidating to be approached by a masked officer.

Legislation currently exists in CA (as of Jan 1) and NY and PA are working on similar laws

For all these reasons, I recommend a favorable report on HB155.

Thanks,

Lore Lyon Rosenthal

HB 155 - MoCo_Elrich_FAV (GA 26).pdf

Uploaded by: Marc Elrich

Position: FAV



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

February 24, 2026

TO: The Honorable J. Sandy Bartlett
Chair, Judiciary Committee

FROM: Marc Elrich
County Executive

RE: House Bill 155, *Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings*

Support

I am writing to express my support for House Bill 155, the *Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings*. The bill requires the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to develop a policy prohibiting the use of face coverings by a law enforcement officer that conceals or obscures the officer's facial identity in the course of duty, and requires a law enforcement agency to adopt a face covering policy consistent with the Commission's policy. Exceptions to the mask prohibition include allowances for tactical operations for purposes of physical safety, and medical masks applicable for occupational health and safety. A law enforcement officer who violates the mask ban would be guilty of a misdemeanor, and on conviction, would be subject to imprisonment of up to two years or a fine of \$2,000 or both.

As the Trump Administration ramps up immigration enforcement, raids by mask-wearing agents of the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement have terrorized our communities and have had a chilling effect on local law enforcement. Residents who may have been generally supportive of the police, and who previously trusted law enforcement to provide community safety and promote stability, have either lost that relationship with police officers or have become extremely suspicious of any law enforcement in their midst.

I am certain that numerous legal and operational concerns will be raised as the Committee deliberates the provisions of House Bill 155 and will need to be addressed. I stand ready to support the Committee in any way as it works to address these issues.

cc: Members of the Judiciary Committee

HB155 Prohibition on Face Coverings EconAction FAV

Uploaded by: Marceline White

Position: FAV



Testimony to the House Judiciary Committee
HB155 Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings
Position: Favorable

February 24, 2026

The Honorable Sandy Bartlett, Chair
House Judiciary Committee
Room 100, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
cc: Members, Judicial Proceedings Committee

Chair Bartlett and Members of the Committee:

Economic Action Maryland Fund is a statewide coalition of individuals and organizations that advances economic rights, equity, and housing justice for Maryland families through research, education, direct service, and advocacy. Our 12,500 supporters include consumer advocates, practitioners, and low-income and working families throughout Maryland.

Economic Action Maryland Fund writes in support of HB155.

Through our tenant and older adult direct service programs, Economic Action Maryland Fund serves immigrant clients and communities. Our work to expand economic security is harmed when seniors and eligible renters do not attend community workshops and outreach efforts due to fear and intimidation by masked officers. Our best avenue to reach older adults to assist them with tax credits is through personal outreach at senior and community centers while our fair housing and tenant work to educate individuals about their rights relies on a mix of online and in-person events.

Given the cost-of-living crisis and the cuts in federal assistance, everyday Marylanders need access to economic supports and information to assist renters and those facing housing discrimination now more than ever.

Masked law enforcement officers reduce public trust in law enforcement and may make law-abiding Marylanders less likely to turn to officers when in need.

For these reasons, Economic Action Maryland Fund supports HB155 and urges a favorable report.

Best,

Marceline White
Executive Director

2209 Maryland Ave · Baltimore, MD · 21218 · 410-220-0494
info@econaction.org · www.econaction.org
Tax ID 52-2266235

Economic Action Maryland Fund is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and your contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.



Best,

Marceline White
Executive Director

2209 Maryland Ave · Baltimore, MD · 21218 · 410-220-0494

info@econaction.org · www.econaction.org

Tax ID 52-2266235

Economic Action Maryland Fund is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and your contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

HB0155 written testimony final.pdf

Uploaded by: Marcia Coe

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable

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

Judiciary Committee

February 24, 2026

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

My name is Dr. Marcia Coe and I am writing in support of HB0155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.

ICE agents are not made safer by wearing masks. They are actually creating less safe conditions because the public isn't able to differentiate federal law enforcement from any other criminal or terrorist who might don a mask.

That's why 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. Furthermore, community members are more likely to intervene if they watch someone being attacked or kidnapped by a masked, unmarked group. There's no way to know if someone is an ICE officer or if they are impersonating an ICE officer.

Our local law enforcement officers are easily identifiable. We should not be allowing armed individuals with masks to intimidate and frighten communities with impunity.

I attended the hearing for the companion bill for this bill, SB0001, on January 22, 2026. I was struck by the oral testimonies. I bring your attention in particular to the eloquent testimony of Major Neill Franklin (ret) from Law Enforcement Action Partnership. He explained that the routine wearing of masks by law enforcement officers offers no tactical advantage and erodes public trust.

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.

Marcia Coe, MD

Leonardtown, Maryland 20650

Favorable HB0155 02-24-26.pdf

Uploaded by: Marcia Greenberg

Position: FAV

Testimony on HB0155 – Favorable
Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings
House Judiciary Committee
February 24, 2026

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

My name is Marcia Greenberg and I am a resident of Lexington Park in St Mary's County. I am writing in support of HB0155 - Prohibition on Face Coverings

I earned my JD degree from Northwestern School of Law, where I studied constitutional law. I graduated from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, where I studied human rights and international law. In the early 1990s, I reviewed nominees from Latin American for the Reebok Human Rights award, and worked for the RF Kennedy Center for Human Rights where we focused on Guatemala, South Africa and South Korea. Later, I worked in Eastern Europe in the early 90s after the Berlin Wall came down. I also worked on a contract for USAID ensuring that women would contribute and benefit from US-sponsored democracy programs around the world – particularly in Eastern Europe and West Africa.

So I know quite a bit about repressive regimes, authoritarian tactics, and governments that spy on and “disappear” their own people. And I know about the dangers posed to women by criminal elements that would abduct and enslave them. But I never, ever – in my wildest nightmares – imagined that our country, the United States of America, would slide into terrorizing our own communities in ways reminiscent of Russia and East Germany, of Pinochet in Chile and the military in Argentina, of Duterte in the Philippines and the military in Myanmar. Nor that we would accept behavior by federal agents that would leave civilians more endangered than before.

Such “official” treatment of citizens and innocent residents by government-led thugs, should not happen in the United States of America. It violates all that we hold true – both legally and morally. What we see now – with ICE agents terrorizing our communities, dragging people out of their cars and their homes, and murdering peaceful protesters – must be stopped in every way possible. They are ruthless and cruel; they ignore our laws and due process. And they are doing it all while hiding their faced, MASKED! We should not be allowing armed individuals with masks to intimidate and frighten communities with impunity.

As long as the Republicans control the House, Senate and White House, we cannot stop this ICE horror at the federal level. Even if we had counties that were willing to protect our neighbors, many do not have the mechanisms to stop it – and some “red counties” would continue to collaborate with ICE. At the local level, this is despite the fact that public safety for ALL of us depends on being able to identify ICE agents. Without visible identification and uniform standards, fear and public distrust in law enforcement increases. Furthermore, community members are more likely to intervene if they see a member of their community being attacked or kidnapped by a masked, unmarked group. How would we be able to distinguish kidnapers and gangs from ICE? There's no way to know if someone is simply impersonating an ICE officer.

Finally, why are they masked in the first place? Are they embarrassed? Do they worry that their friends, family, former coaches and teachers, local pastors and mentors ... will be disgusted that they have accepted monetary incentives, and taken jobs that involve vicious tactics against innocent people and

sowing terror in our communities? If they have some concern about people knowing what they are doing, then maybe they should search their hearts and get out.

So let's help them: Let's get rid of masks in Maryland! Unable to protect ourselves at the federal and county levels, it is imperative that protections be passed and enforced at the state level. We turn to you, our Senators, to urge you to do the right thing for all Marylanders.

I urge you to vote in favor of HB0155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings for transparency and safety.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Marcia Greenberg
St Mary's County

HB155Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Mary Anne Newkirk

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL – FAVORABLE

HOUSE BILL 155 – Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

Feb 24, 2026

Dear Chair Bartlett, Vice-Chair Davis, Members of the Committee,

I offer favorable testimony in support of HB 155 – Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

I am sad and angry that such legislation is needed. The United States is not a police state. Even the Gestapo and SS in Nazi Germany showed their faces. Clearly, that ICE masks its officers reinforces the shame of the tactics they are using. What cowards they are, unwilling to stand up for what they are doing and take the consequences.

All law enforcement officers at the local and state level are mask-free and even wear name tags. ICE, if you want to truly call your employees law enforcement officers and not the thugs that they are, take the masks off.

I urge the House Judiciary Committee to issue a **favorable report on House Bill 155**.

Mary Anne Newkirk
21044

Favorable Testimony for HB 0155 - Prohibition on F

Uploaded by: Mary Beck

Position: FAV

Mary Beck
1317 Maple Ave
Halethorpe, MD 21227
District 44B

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 0155, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers -
Prohibition on Face Coverings

2/24/2026

TO: Chair J. Sandy Bartlett & Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Mary Beck

Members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Mary Beck, I live in Halethorpe, Maryland, and I am writing to support HB 0155, Prohibition on Face Coverings, and to change the effective date of this law to July - or sooner, whenever possible.

Allowing any kind of law enforcement officer to conceal their identity makes me feel deeply unsafe. Officers should always be able to - and be required to - prove their identity and status as an officer of the law when requested by another individual. This is crucial for holding officers accountable for unlawful or otherwise unsafe behavior. Additionally, identifying an officer is crucial for me as a woman to feel safe from someone who may be falsely claiming to be an officer. I ask, "who watches the watchmen" - and how can we watch them if they can cover their faces? No one is above the law.

Please let Maryland be a safer place for all of us than elsewhere in our country. Prohibiting masked law enforcement is one small step towards ensuring the people wearing those badges are discharging their duties faithfully. I urge you to support HB 0155 and help ensure that Maryland's law enforcement is being held to the highest standards of conduct.

FaceCovering HB0155.pdf

Uploaded by: Mary McDougal

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable

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

February 19, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair

My name is Mary and I am writing in support of SB0001 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.

When you are confident that your actions are not harmful and your behavior towards fellow human beings is not deplorable, you know that there is no reason to hide behind a mask.

You know who does hide behind masks? Bank robbers, rapists, and other criminals who have the intent of escaping punishment for their actions. ICE isn't made safer by wearing masks. They are actually creating less safe conditions because the public isn't able to differentiate federal law enforcement from any other criminal who might don a mask.

That's why 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. Furthermore, community members are more likely to intervene if they watch someone being attacked or kidnapped by a masked, unmarked group. There's no way to know if someone is an ICE officer or if they are impersonating an ICE officer.

Our local law enforcement officers are easily identifiable. We should not be allowing armed individuals with masks to intimidate and frighten communities with impunity.

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.

HB0155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers

Uploaded by: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus

Position: FAV



MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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ASHANTI MARTINEZ, CHAIR
GABRIEL ACEVERO, VICE-CHAIR
DENI TAVERAS, TREASURER
JOE VOGEL, SECRETARY
JASON A. AVILA GARCIA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TO: Delegate Bartlett., Chair
Delegate Davis, Vice Chair
Judiciary Committee
FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus
DATE: 2/24/2026
RE: HB0155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers -
Prohibition on Face Coverings

The MLLC supports HB0155- Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB0155.

Within the past year, federal agents, primarily ICE agents, have worked with state and local law enforcement agencies across the country to carry out enforcement and removal operations. These operations have been subject to a great deal of scrutiny for various reasons, one being the intimidating and secretive nature of the facial coverings worn by ICE and local law enforcement agents during these operations. The practice has raised serious concerns about accountability and public trust, prompting legislative action in other states. California addressed this issue directly through its "No Secret Police Act," enacted in November 2025, which restricted the use of facial coverings by state law enforcement officers.¹ California's rationale for enacting this legislation was due to the impact these practices had on the public perception of officers, like instilling fear among members of the public.² Moreover, the California Legislature stated that the reduced visibility of an officer's face could lead to more intense interactions with the public.³ As illustrated on ICE's website, most of these enforcement operations are directed toward Latino communities.⁴ Maryland's Latino communities also are particularly vulnerable in these situations.

This bill will prohibit the use of face coverings by law enforcement officers in the course of duty and requires law enforcement agencies with officers operating within Maryland to adopt a policy consistent with the policy developed under the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commissions.

Additionally, the bill establishes penalties for violating the prohibition, such as making it a misdemeanor and holding that a violator waives all immunity in civil action. This bill can help hold law enforcement officers accountable for violations made against the Latino community. Moreover, it is a valuable step toward ensuring the safety of the Maryland Latino community.

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB0155.

¹ [California SB-627 Law Enforcement: Masks](#)

² [California SB-627 \(1\)\(a-b\) Law Enforcement: Masks](#)

³ [California SB-627 \(1\)\(c-d\) Law Enforcement: Masks](#)

⁴ [ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations Statistics | ICE](#)

people on the go Maryland testimony in support of

Uploaded by: Mat Rice

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 155

Public Safety – Police Officers – Face Coverings

Members of the House Judiciary committee

DATE: February, 24, 2026

Sponsored by

Delegates: Williams, Lehman, Pena-Melnyk, Behler, Boafu, Charkoudian, Crutchfield, Feldmark, Foley, Forbes, Guyton, Harrison, Hill, Ivey, Kaufman, Korman, Martinez, Mireku-North, Palakovich Carr, Pasteur, Ruth, Schindler, Solomon, Stinnett, Wilkins, Wims, Woorman, Wu, Young, and Ziegler

Support for HB 155 - Prohibition of Face Coverings for Police Officers in Normal Duties

Honorable Members of the Committee,

People On The Go of Maryland is a statewide self-advocacy/systems advocacy organization led by and for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities more commonly referred to by professionals without disabilities as (I/DD). We are writing today in strong support of HB 155,

which would prohibit/not allow police officers from wearing face coverings while performing their normal duties, with appropriate exceptions for undercover work and legitimate health or safety emergencies this bill also requires the Maryland police training commission to develop clear rules/standards around when it is appropriate to wear a mask/face covering.

Why This Matters for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

For people with I/DD, clear and effective communication is essential especially in stressful or confusing situations. Many individuals/people in our community rely heavily on facial expressions, lip reading, and visual cues to understand what is being said and to assess/figure out whether a situation is safe. When police officers wear face coverings during routine interactions, it creates significant barriers:

- **Communication Barriers:** Many people with I/DD process information differently and depend on seeing a person's full face to understand tone, intent, and instructions. A covered face can make it nearly impossible to read emotions or follow verbal/spoken directions
- **Increased Anxiety and Fear:** Encounters with law enforcement can already be intimidating. When an officer's face is hidden, it can heighten fear, confusion, and anxiety making it harder for individuals to respond appropriately or advocate for themselves/someone else; like a parent advocating for their child.
- **Difficulty Building Trust:** Trust between police and the disability community is built through human connections. Seeing an officer's face helps people with I/DD feel safer, more respected, and more willing to cooperate and communicate.
- **Risk of Misunderstanding:** People with I/DD are already at higher risk of being misunderstood or misinterpreted during police encounters. Face coverings add another layer of confusion that can escalate situations unnecessarily.

Benefits for the Community at Large

This legislation is not only critical for people with disabilities it benefits everyone. Transparent, accountable policing strengthens public safety and community trust:

- **Accountability and Transparency:** Visible faces make officers identifiable and accountable. This is a cornerstone of democratic policing and helps prevent abuses of power.
- **De-escalation:** Officers who show their faces are more likely to be seen as approachable and human, which can de-escalate/calm down tense situations and reduce the likelihood of conflict.
- **Community Policing:** Building relationships between police and the communities they serve requires openness and visibility. Face coverings undermine these efforts.

- **Public Confidence:** When the public can see and identify the officers sworn to protect them, it fosters/creates greater confidence in law enforcement and the justice system.

Reasonable Exceptions Are Included

We recognize that there are legitimate circumstances where face coverings may be necessary—such as undercover operations, hazardous material situations, or public health emergencies. HB 155 appropriately accounts for these exceptions while ensuring that routine, everyday policing is conducted with full transparency and respect for the dignity of all community members.

Conclusion

People On the Go of Maryland requests for you to support HB 155. This bill promotes clear communication, reduces fear and confusion, and strengthens trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve especially for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are too often overlooked in policy discussions.

Policing should be transparent, accountable, and human. HB 155 helps ensure that it is.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Mat Rice Executive Director

People on The Go of Maryland

for any questions regarding this testimony please contact Mat Rice Executive Director

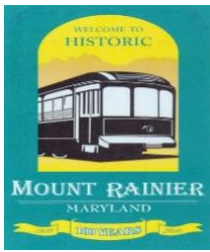
phone: 410-925-5706

email: mat@pogmd.org

Strong support of House Bill 155.pdf

Uploaded by: Mayor Celina Benitez

Position: FAV



Office of The Mayor Celina R. Benitez

1 Municipal Place, Mount Rainier, Maryland 20712 Telephone: (301) 985-6585 MountRainierMD.org

February 20, 2026

Re: **Strong support of House Bill 155**

Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I respectfully submit this testimony in **strong support of House Bill 155**, which promotes transparency, accountability, and public trust in law enforcement by prohibiting the use of face coverings by law enforcement officers during official duties, except when engaged in undercover operations.

This legislation is especially important given our community's strong emphasis on relationship-based, community-oriented public safety. Mount Rainier is a diverse municipality where residents regularly interact with the same officers at community events, neighborhood patrols, and local meetings. Clear visibility and identification of officers during these interactions is essential to maintaining trust, de-escalating conflict, and ensuring that residents feel safe and respected. When community members can clearly see and identify the officers serving them, it strengthens legitimacy, improves cooperation, and supports the collaborative public safety model Mount Rainier has worked hard to build.

HB 155 strikes an appropriate and thoughtful balance between **public transparency and officer safety**. By directing the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to develop a model policy, the bill ensures statewide consistency while allowing for professional standards grounded in best practices. At the same time, the exception for undercover operations appropriately recognizes circumstances where anonymity is necessary to protect officers and preserve the integrity of investigations.

This legislation because it reinforces the principle that public servants, especially those entrusted with significant authority, should operate in a manner that is visible and accountable to the communities they serve. Clear identification not only protects residents, but also protects officers by reducing confusion, miscommunication, and mistrust during interactions.

For these reasons, I urged the Committee to issue a **favorable report on House Bill 155** and move this important legislation forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued commitment to public safety and good governance. Please feel free to contact me at 301-985-6585 or via email MayorBenitez@MountRainierMd.org if you have any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Celina R. Benitez

Mayor Celina R. Benitez, City of Mount Rainier.

HB155.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Melody Hession

Position: FAV



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

HB0155 _OFJ_ FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Member Out For Justice

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB0115:

Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

DATE: February 20, 2026

FROM: Out for Justice

TO: House Judiciary Committee

Dear Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the Committee,

Out for Justice is a grassroots non profit formed by formerly incarcerated individuals that organizes and equips justice-impaired people to reform harmful criminal legal policies and remove barriers to successful reentry. **We submit this testimony on behalf of the organization in support of House Bill 155.**

House Bill 155 strengthens transparency and accountability in law enforcement by prohibiting the use of face coverings that conceal an officer's identity while on duty, with clearly defined exceptions. For communities disproportionately impacted by the criminal legal system, the ability to identify the officers exercising state power is essential to public trust, effective oversight, and constitutional policing.

Additionally, the bill requires the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to develop a model policy and mandates that law enforcement agencies adopt consistent standards affirming their commitment to transparency, accountability, and public trust. By limiting the use of face coverings to specific and narrowly tailored safety circumstances, the legislation balances legitimate officer safety concerns with the public's right to visible and accountable policing.

As an organization that amplifies the voices of individuals directly impacted by the criminal legal system and advocates for policies that reduce harm and increase community safety, Out for Justice believes this bill advances both equity and public confidence in law enforcement.

For these reasons, **Out for Justice urges a favorable report on House Bill 155.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

HB 155 Gibson-Banks Center Testimony (Favorable).p

Uploaded by: Michael Pinard

Position: FAV

Testimony Concerning House Bill 155
Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings
Position: Favorable

To: Delegate J. Sandy Bartlett, Chair
Delegate Debra Davis, Vice-Chair
Members of the Judiciary Committee

From: Michael Pinard, Faculty Director and Monique L. Dixon, Executive Director,
Gibson-Banks Center for Race and the Law, University of Maryland Francis King
Carey School of Law

Date: February 20, 2026

On behalf of the Gibson-Banks Center for Race and the Law (“Gibson-Banks Center”) at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law,¹ we appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of House Bill 155 (“HB 155”), which would require the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to develop a model policy prohibiting law enforcement officers from wearing a face covering, and also require state (including out-of-state), local, and federal law enforcement agencies with officers policing in Maryland to adopt a policy consistent with the model policy. We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report because prohibiting face coverings worn by law enforcement officers aligns with our collective interests in transparency, accountability, trust, dignity, and public safety. Additionally, HB 155 aligns with Maryland state law as well as local law enforcement policies that advance these same interests.²

The Gibson-Banks Center works collaboratively to re-imagine and transform institutions and systems of racial inequality, marginalization, and oppression. Through education and engagement, advocacy, and research, the Center examines and addresses racial inequality and advances racial justice in a variety of issue areas, including the criminal legal system. Policing is a core component of the criminal legal system. Effective policing is also critical to the overall health of communities.

¹ This written testimony is submitted on behalf of the Gibson-Banks Center and not on behalf of the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law, the University of Maryland, Baltimore, or the University System Maryland.

² *Infra* notes 11 and 12.

HB 155 appreciates that law enforcement officers are public agents tasked with serving and protecting communities. Officers have mighty powers, vis-à-vis the public, to exercise these duties. When legally justified, officers can pursue, detain, arrest, injure, and even kill an individual. However, these powers co-exist with monumental responsibilities, which include transparency, accountability, and elevating public safety. To execute these responsibilities effectively—and to fulfill their oaths—officers need to earn and keep the public’s trust. In Maryland, they must do so in Black and Brown communities that bear the scars and traumas of over-policing, disinvestment, and neglect, as well as in communities that have been privileged to enjoy productive, mutually beneficial relationships with law enforcement.³

HB 155 is crucial because no officer should exercise their powers while hiding, shielding, or concealing their faces. Our faces reveal who we are. Our non-verbal communications—in the forms of facial movements and expressions—provide insight into our thoughts, dispositions, moods, and intentions. Over five years ago, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and thus in a different context than the current climate, the International Association of Chiefs of Police warned that “because face coverings block facial expressions that help humans interpret language, communication between community members and law enforcement can be even more challenging whether either or both parties are wearing face coverings.”⁴ Any time law enforcement officers wear face coverings, their interactions with communities and the public are compromised.

Clearly in these current times, some law enforcement officers, such as U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents, who wear face coverings do not want the public to know who they are.⁵ Armed with deadly weapons, they are interfering with and detaining people on streets, in homes, and in buildings. As the national scene demonstrates, these officers, because they are essentially anonymized, are stoking fear in the individuals and communities they are targeting as well as with family members, friends, co-workers, and passersby. Also, in many instances they are causing confusion, as in the fog of the fright it is often not apparent to the targeted individuals and others that they are even law enforcement officers.⁶ The ripple effects of the horror and confusion are endless, extending to the broader public absorbing videos of these

³ See, e.g., CIVIL RIGHTS DIV., U.S. DEP’T OF JUSTICE, INVESTIGATION OF THE BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT 4-5 (Aug. 10, 2016) (conveying Baltimore City residents’ perceptions of “two Baltimores” vis-à-vis the Baltimore City Police Department. “Community members living in the City’s wealthier and largely white neighborhoods told [investigators from the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice] that officers tend to be respectful and responsive to their needs, while many individuals living in the City’s largely African-American communities informed [investigators] that officers tend to be disrespectful and do not respond promptly to their calls for service.”).

⁴ INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POLICE CHIEFS, FACE COVERINGS AND POLICE-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (Oct. 2020), https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/246232_IACP_Covid19_Face-coverings_P3.pdf

⁵ See generally, CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS, MASKED AND UNIDENTIFIABLE: THE RISKS OF FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATING WITHOUT IDENTIFICATION, (Aug. 28, 2025) (hereafter MASKED AND UNIDENTIFIABLE), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/masked-and-unidentifiable-the-risks-of-federal-law-enforcement-operating-without-identification/>.

⁶ See, e.g., Sophia Sostrin, *WA lawmakers move to ban law enforcement from covering their faces*, SEATTLE TIMES, Jan. 14, 2026 (reporting that sponsor of a similar bill in Washington State “pointed to reports from communities with large immigrant populations where residents struggle to tell whether masked officers are legitimate law enforcement or imposters, particularly in during high stressed encounters”), <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/wa-lawmakers-move-to-ban-law-enforcement-from-covering-their-faces/>.

encounters on television and social media, as well as to communities in cities, suburbs, and rural areas that believe they will be targeted in the immediate or more distant future. The result is that face coverings have *escalated* law enforcement encounters with individuals and communities, the very antithesis of effective policing.⁷

Quite simply, it is impossible to expect the public to trust public servants who conceal their faces. Concealment, in this context, signals the absence and disregard of accountability and transparency and, therefore, eviscerates these pillars of policing. More concretely, allowing and incentivizing officers to wear face coverings further traumatizes communities of color that have suffered from unconstitutional and abusive policing, as well as destabilizes communities that have enjoyed historically healthy relationships with law enforcement. We have seen nationally that allowing (and incentivizing) officers to hide and conceal their faces has undermined public safety and trust and has promoted fear and doubts about our democracy.⁸

The relationships between law enforcement, the public, the rule of law, and our democracy are fraught at this moment. With HB 155, Maryland joins states that have passed⁹ or are considering similar bills.¹⁰ It also aligns with Maryland state law¹¹ and local law enforcement policies and practices¹² that require officers to identify themselves to members of the public.

HB 155 is rightfully and urgently focused on transparency, accountability, dignity, and public safety. For the reasons set forth above, we ask for a favorable report.

⁷ For example, the National Policing Institute (“NPI”) has a webpage that provides an overview of its research and resources on de-escalation skills. In introducing the page, the NPI asserts that “[d]e-escalation in policing is a critical strategy for safely managing high-stress, potentially volatile interactions between law enforcement and the public.” NATIONAL POLICING INSTITUTE, *Advancing De-escalation in Policing*, <https://www.policinginstitute.org/de-escalation/>.

⁸ See MASKED AND UNIDENTIFIABLE, *supra* note 5.

⁹ CAL. GOV’T CODE § 7289 (West 2026).

¹⁰ Among these states are Alaska (H.B. 250, 34th Leg., 2nd Sess. (Ak. 2026)); Florida (H.B. 419, 2026 Reg. Sess. (Fla. 2026)); Georgia (S.B. 389, Gen. Assem., 158th Sess. (Ga. 2026)); New Jersey (S.B. 3114, 222nd Leg., 2026 Sess. (N.J. 2026)); Washington (H.B. 2173, 69th Leg., Reg. Sess. (Wash. 2026)); Illinois (H.B. 4086, 104th Gen. Assem., 2025-2026 Sess. (Ill. 2025)); Massachusetts (H.4684, 194th Gen. Court (Mass. 2025)); New York (S.8462, 248th Gen. Assem., 2025-2026 Reg. Sess. (N.Y. 2025)); Pennsylvania (S.B. 1071, Gen. Assem., 2025-2026 Reg. Sess. (Pa. 2025)); Tennessee (H.B. 1442, 114th Gen. Assem., 2025-2026 Sess. (Tenn. 2025)); and Vermont (S.208, Gen. Assem., 2025-2026 Reg. Sess. (Vt. 2026)).

¹¹ See MD. CRIM PROC. § 2-109(a) (West 2022) (requiring police officers to identify themselves at the outset “of a traffic stop or other stop”).

¹² See, e.g., Baltimore Police Department, Policy 1501, Police Badges (March 25, 2017) (“Uniformed [officers] shall display their badges on the outermost garment, over their left breast”), <https://public.powerdms.com/BALTIMOREMD/documents/54986#:~:text=Issued%20Police%20Badge%20%E2%94%80%20Curved.1>

Testimony on House Bill 155-MGK.pdf

Uploaded by: Michelle Koul

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill 155 – Favorable
HB155 – Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings
House Judiciary Committee
February 20, 2026

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

My name is Michelle Koul, and I am a constituent of District 31. I am writing **in support of HB155 – Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.**

I am the daughter of a retired NYPD Sergeant, the mother of a 23y old daughter living alone in Minneapolis and a resident of District 31. It pains me to see my father's anguish at the harm ICE is doing to the reputation of all law enforcement due ICE's obvious lack of training and the orders they have been given. I am kept up at night *not* because I fear that my daughter will be a victim of crime - instead I am worried that she will be victim of my government's federal forces. It is insane.

This bill is unfortunately necessary to prepare Maryland for what is coming: an untrained secret police force who has been given permission to violate the constitutional rights of citizens and non-citizens alike. Uncovering their faces is a small act that might cause them to temper their actions, and if not, at least give some recourse to victims in civil proceedings that might hold the offenders accountable.

Law enforcement should not be afraid to show their faces, period.

As a recently retired 25y faculty member at USNA, I myself am not unfamiliar with what the role of law enforcement and the military *should* be in our society. This is not it. I thank my lucky stars I landed in Maryland, and please do your part to protect us from the federal chaos. Please vote yes on HB155.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Dr. Michelle Koul (she/her)
Severna Park, MD 21146
The views expressed are those of the author
and do not necessarily reflect the official
position of the Department of Defense.

[FINAL] DNW HB 155 Testimony.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Nicole Williams

Position: FAV

NICOLE A. WILLIAMS, ESQ.
Legislative District 22
Prince George's County

Judiciary Committee

Chair, Public Safety Subcommittee

Chair, Prince George's
County House Delegation



Annapolis Office
The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 207
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3058
800-492-7122 Ext. 3058
Nicole.Williams@house.maryland.gov

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 24, 2026

The Honorable J. Sandy Bartlett
Chair of the House Judiciary Committee
100 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

House Bill 155

Good afternoon, Chair Bartlett, Vice-Chair Davis, and the members of the House Judiciary Committee. I am Delegate Nicole Williams, and I will be testifying in favor of House Bill 155, also known as **Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings**. This bill would require that the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission develop a model policy prohibiting the use of a facial covering in the performance of their duties and require that law enforcement agencies adopt policies consistent with the model policy developed by the Commission. The intent of this legislation is to prohibit certain law enforcement officers from wearing facial coverings while in the performance of their duties in the State, except when actively engaged in an undercover operation.

This legislation seeks to improve transparency, accountability, and public safety by reaffirming the public trust in law enforcement agents. In municipalities and jurisdictions across the State, community-oriented policing is the foundation of a strong relationship between law enforcement and the public. In order for this relationship to continue to thrive, there must be a clear way to identify law enforcement officers to ensure that those who they serve feel safe in their own communities.

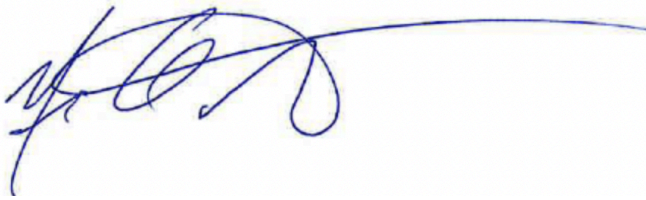
In recent months, we have seen a frightening rise in unidentifiable law enforcement agents carrying out arrests and other duties in our communities. There are numerous examples of agents wearing ski masks, balaclavas, and other forms of face coverings as a means of keeping themselves from being identified and ultimately inhibiting accountability. A member of the public who is approached by an unidentifiable law enforcement agent may refuse to follow orders out of a belief that the agent is not who they claim to be. Additionally, bystanders

witnessing an arrest taking place where the law enforcement agent is unidentifiable may not know if what is taking place is lawful or not, further increasing the chance of escalation.

This legislation also aims to protect law enforcement officers themselves. When an officer is clearly identifiable, both other officers and the public know that the individual is an authority and can be trusted to be acting in the public interest. Bystanders witnessing an interaction between an unidentifiable law enforcement officer and a member of the public may act or get involved, putting both parties in danger. This legislation protects officers by minimizing the chance for confusion and miscommunication during interactions between them and the public.

House Bill 155 is a measure to improve public safety, accountability, transparency, and trust in our law enforcement agencies. For these reasons, I urge this committee to give a favorable report on House Bill 155.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nicole Williams', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Delegate Nicole A. Williams, Esq.

HB155_MSEA_Lemle_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Paul Lemle

Position: FAV

SUPPORT
Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings
House Bill 155

House Judiciary Committee
February 24, 2026

Paul Lemle
President

The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 155, which requires the development of a model policy prohibiting the use of face coverings by any law enforcement officer operating in the state of Maryland.

MSEA represents 76,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools and community colleges, teaching and supporting our almost 900,000 K-12 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA represents more than 40 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

House Bill 155 is part of a number of legislative initiatives that MSEA is supporting this session to lend our voice to protect students in schools and their communities. There has been a dangerous escalation of authoritarian tactics that threaten safety, civil liberties, and the democratic values across the country. The use of masked and unmarked law enforcement agents has increased in the last 12 months as part of the authoritarian actions of the Trump Administration to occupy American cities and advance unjust law enforcement actions with little regard for due process and equal protection. Communities are being traumatized, requiring states like Maryland to resist assaults on our civil liberties through legislative action such as this bill.

Educators have a moral and professional responsibility to keep all students safe, primarily in school, and also to advocate for safe communities for our students and their families. We believe the prohibition of masked law enforcement actions is part of creating safer communities and ultimately better learning and living conditions for our students.

MSEA adds our voice to this critical moment that requires a renewed commitment to civil rights and social justice and urges a favorable report on House Bill 155.

HB 0155_FAV_Judiciary Committee.pdf

Uploaded by: Philippa Gasnier

Position: FAV

Philippa Gasnier
7005 Southwark Terrace
Hyattsville MD 20782
(240) 475-2202
pegemail@gmail.com

Committee: House Judiciary Committee
Testimony on: HB 0155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers -
Prohibition on Face Coverings
Organization: Individual
Person Submitting: Philippa Gasnier
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 24, 2026

Dear Chairwoman Bartlett and members of the committee,

I am writing in favor of HB 0155 (Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings), which would ban the use of face coverings by any law enforcement officers and agents operating in Maryland. Law enforcement officers, when operating in our State, are subject to our state laws and our State has a duty to protect the health and welfare of its residents.

For years, Maryland has recognized that trust and accountability are crucial for effective law enforcement. Maryland has engaged in statewide training, local initiatives and legislative efforts (like the TRUST Acts) to build trust, foster collaboration, and solve problems to improve public safety and quality of life in our State. Why would Maryland then condone unidentified, masked officers confronting its citizens? Officers in masks create terror and intimidation in the community. The presence of unidentifiable officers makes policing more challenging and dangerous, as community members or fellow officers may mistake them for a criminal. In many reported cases, criminals have posed as law enforcement to fool and intimidate citizens. In addition, this practice impedes accountability for officers who are engaged in misconduct, and, of course, undermines trust in law enforcement.

I support HB-0155 as a common sense measure, consistent with Maryland's long held understanding that effective and accountable law enforcement requires transparency and identification in the community. The bill rightfully provides for certain exceptions. Other than such exceptions, both Maryland residents and law enforcement operating in Maryland deserve to have the certainty and safety of identifiable, accountable law enforcement. I ask that you vote in favor of HB 0155 for a safer and better Maryland.

Thank you,
Philippa Gasnier

Eckel FAV HB155 - ban LE face covering.pdf

Uploaded by: Rianna Eckel

Position: FAV

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

My name is Rianna Eckel, I am a resident of District 43A and a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore. Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore is 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 writing in support of HB155 - 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.

Throughout 2025, we saw copious news coverage of federal law enforcement actions conducted by officers wearing street clothes and balaclavas. The fact that incidents of police impersonation have been on the rise in Maryland and nationally is not a coincidence: when it becomes impossible to determine who is a legitimate law enforcement officer, criminals can more plausibly claim to be police by simply putting on a mask, no fake uniform or badge required. Even the FBI has recognized the danger, circulating a bulletin to law enforcement agencies in October 2025 that warned criminals were taking advantage of routine mask-wearing by law enforcement to disguise themselves as ICE agents.¹ This confusion also makes routine law enforcement operations more dangerous. 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.

HB155 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 law enforcement agencies operating in Maryland to adopt that policy or its equivalent. 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 HB155, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Rianna Eckel
2300 Hunter St, Baltimore 21218
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

¹ Cameron, Dell & Haskins, Caroline, "FBI warns of criminals posing as ICE, urges agents to ID themselves." WIRED Magazine, Nov. 4, 2025. <https://www.wired.com/story/fbi-warns-of-criminals-posing-as-ice-urges-agents-to-id-themselves/>

Testimony in support of HB0155 - Public Safety - L

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

HB0155_RichardKaplowitz_FWA

02/24/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz

Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON HB#0155- POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

TO: Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#0155, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

This bill is Maryland's forceful response to the illegal and constitutional actions of DHS and ICE. As reported by the Centers for American Progress - *Masked and Unidentifiable: The Risks of Federal Law Enforcement Operating Without Identification - Since taking office, the Trump administration has undermined public safety and law enforcement accountability by supporting the dangerous practice of obscuring the identity of ICE and other federal officers.*¹

In recent months, federal U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and other federal law enforcement officers—roaming the streets in plainclothes, masked, and sometimes armed—have stoked fear in communities nationwide... Enforcement actions by masked or unidentifiable officers, which have even included the arrests of [elected officials](#) and [other U.S. citizens](#), are part of a broader effort to keep up with arbitrary and cruel immigration [arrest quotas](#) set by the Trump administration. As a result, today, ICE is operating in ways akin to the actions of [secret police forces](#), tasked with carrying out Trump's political agenda. These practices have stoked fear in communities across the country and raised serious questions about the safety and legitimacy of their operations under the Trump administration.

This is the new, frightening image of U.S. immigration enforcement under the Trump administration: violence, covered faces, and unknown agency affiliations.

Maryland can and should combat this dangerous paradigm by passing this bill requiring the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to develop a model policy prohibiting the use of a face covering in the performance of duty; requiring a law enforcement agency to adopt a policy consistent with the model policy developed by the Commission; and prohibiting a certain law enforcement officer from wearing a certain face covering while in the performance of duty in the State, except when actively engaged in an undercover operation.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable with amendments report on HB#0155.

¹ <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/masked-and-unidentifiable-the-risks-of-federal-law-enforcement-operating-without-identification/#:~:text=The%20inability%20to%20determine%20whether,quell%20opposition%20to%20their%20agenda.>

Testimony on HB0155.pdf

Uploaded by: Robin Zwier

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable

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

House Judiciary Committee

February 20, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Sandy Barlett, Vice Chair Debra Davis, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Robin Zwier and I am writing in support of SB0001 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.

When I report into work, I do not wear a mask to hide my identity. If a colleague or customer I interact with has any issues with my actions, they will be able to clearly identify who I am. Heck, I'll even give them my name. When you are confident that your actions are not harmful and your behavior towards fellow human beings is not deplorable, you know that there is no reason to hide behind a mask.

You know who does hide behind masks? Bank robbers, rapists, and others who have the intent of escaping punishment for their actions. ICE isn't made safer by wearing masks. They are actually creating less safe conditions because the public isn't able to differentiate federal law enforcement from any other person with ill intent who might don a mask.

That's why 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. Furthermore, community members are more likely to intervene if they watch someone being attacked or kidnapped by a masked, unmarked group. There's no way to know if someone is an ICE officer or if they are impersonating an ICE officer.

Our local law enforcement officers are easily identifiable. We should not be allowing armed individuals with masks to intimidate and frighten communities with impunity.

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.

Robin Zwier

HB0155– Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Ruth White

Position: FAV

HB0155 - FAV
Ruth White
D13, Columbia MD 21045

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable

HB0155 –Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings

House Judiciary Committee

February 24, 2026

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

My name is Ruth White and I live in District 13 in Howard County Maryland. I am writing in support of HB0155 –Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings which requires the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to develop a statewide model policy prohibiting law enforcement officers from wearing face coverings while performing their duties, except when actively engaged in an undercover operation. This legislation promotes transparency, accountability, and trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

I am a lifelong Maryland resident, a mother, and grandmother, and widow of a veteran who also retired from a major national security agency, a committed patriot who cared about the rule of law. I am offering thoughts and prayers for the important decisions you will be making this session on immigration. There are local and national reports of criminals imitating the ICE masking to commit crimes. It is important to me as a mother and grandmother in Maryland to be able to identify and trust police at all levels.

The ICE masking I see pictures of in the news everyday terrifies me - reminding me of the work of special police forces used by a host of autocratic repressive governments my husband abhorred, and in our movies like Star Wars. Intended to instill fear. I want the police to be easily identified so I can trust them and know they are clearly accountable. Public trust of the police makes us all safer.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB0155.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ruth White

FAVORABLE HB0155_Samantha Hodge-Williams.pdf

Uploaded by: Samantha Hodge-Williams

Position: FAV

Testimony on Senate Bill – Favorable
HB0155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

House Judicial Committee

February 24th, 2026

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

My name is Samantha Hodge-Williams, and I am a resident of Garrett County, Maryland. I am writing in support of **HB0155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings**

It is important for our public safety that ICE officers can be identified. Without visible identification and uniform standards, fear and public distrust in law enforcement increases. Furthermore, community members are more likely to intervene if they watch someone being attacked or kidnapped by a masked, unmarked group. There's no way to know if someone is simply impersonating an ICE officer.

Our county sheriff values transparency and the community has benefited from this. Every day, law enforcement officers wear uniforms and bodycams to fulfill duties serving communities with hiding their faces or identity. Unidentified ICE officers who typically do not notify local law enforcement of their whereabouts, are more likely to cause tragic friendly fire incidents, where one officer accidentally shoots another. We should not be allowing armed individuals with masks to be held to a different standard and rules than local officers, intimidating and frightening communities with impunity.

I urge you to vote in favor of HB0155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings for transparency and safety.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Testimony on HB155.pdf

Uploaded by: Sara Ryan

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable

Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

Committee: Judiciary

2/20/2026

Dear Honorable Chair, Delegate J. Sandy Bartlett., Vice Chair, Delegate Debra Davis, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sara D. Ryan, and I am writing in support of HB155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.

It is of crucial importance to public safety that ICE officers can be identified. Without visible identification and uniform standards, fear and public distrust in law enforcement increases. Furthermore, community members are more likely to intervene if they watch someone being attacked or kidnapped by a masked, unmarked group. There's no way to know if someone is an ICE officer or if they are impersonating an ICE officer.

I am a senior citizen. I would be terrified if an unidentified, masked individual approached my car and asked for my identification or told me to get out of the car. We teach our children to ask to see a police officer's badge when we teach them how to be safe from strangers. Current practices contradict basic safety rules.

Our local law enforcement officers are easily identifiable. We should not be allowing armed individuals with masks to intimidate and frighten communities with impunity.

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.

CASA_FAV_HB155.pdf

Uploaded by: Shana Khader

Position: FAV



Testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 155

HB 155 – Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings

House Judiciary Committee

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

We Are CASA (formerly, “CASA”) is pleased to offer **favorable testimony** in **support** of **HB 155 - Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings**.

We Are CASA is a national organization building power and improving the quality of life in working-class Black, Latino/a/e, Afro-descendent, Indigenous, and Immigrant communities.

With a membership of over 189,000 members, We Are CASA creates change with its power-building model blending human services, community organizing, and advocacy to serve the full spectrum of the needs, dreams, and aspirations of members. For nearly forty years, We Are CASA has employed grassroots community organizing to bring our communities closer together and fight for justice, while simultaneously providing vital services to communities across the state and beyond.

A. Masked law enforcement terrorizes communities and breaks public trust.

As one federal district court recently explained, “ICE goes masked for a single reason—to terrorize Americans into quiescence.”¹ The data bears this out: 86% of people report increased fear of violence when officers wear facial coverings.² The recent experiences of community members across Maryland bear this out, too.

We Are CASA operates a hotline through which community members can report ICE enforcement actions they have witnessed or experienced. In the last six months of 2025 alone, We Are CASA received over 2,000 calls to the hotline, with many calls notably referencing enforcement actions carried out by masked men.

¹ Findings of Fact and Rulings of Law, Pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 52(A), Am. Assoc. of Univ. Professors v. Rubio, No. 25-CV-19685, Dkt. No. 261, at 98 (D. Mass. Sep. 30, 2025), <https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/69784731/261/american-association-of-university-professors-v-rubio/>.

² US Immigration Policy Center, “Accountability, and Oversight of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE): Public Safety Benefits of Unmasking, Body-Worn Cameras, and Identification,” Feb. 10, 2026 (“USIPC Report”).

For example, in December 2025, We Are CASA received a call on our raid tip hotline from a young person near the Eastern Shore whose father had been attacked and detained. He reported that a group of six masked men tackled his father to the ground before his eyes. His father was taken away, and the caller did not know where his father was being taken.

In January 2026 in Silver Spring, four men in masks and hooded sweatshirts emerged from unmarked vehicles and tackled a man on the sidewalk, using a taser on him so that he collapsed to the ground.

In October 2025, We Are CASA received a call from a distressed mother in Hyattsville explaining that she, her husband, and her children made a stop while driving. While they were stopped, three unmarked vehicles approached their vehicle, and a group of masked men emerged. Her husband was taken by these masked men in front of her children.

The public reasonably expects law enforcement to be identifiable: 91% of people are more likely to seek help from an unmasked officer, and 93% are more likely to trust unmasked officers to comply with the law.³ When a community member is taken by masked individuals in unmarked vehicles at gunpoint, they and their families have no way of knowing who is taking them, where they are going, or why. In addition to instilling fear, the practice erodes the trust of community members in law enforcement and in our legal system.

B. Masked law enforcement puts vulnerable communities at heightened risk of serious crime.

Masked law enforcement puts already vulnerable communities at heightened risk of serious crime. Right now, plainclothes, masked individuals are attacking individuals on our public streets and throwing them into unmarked vehicles.

Predictably, there have now been multiple documented instances of criminals impersonating ICE and kidnapping or assaulting unsuspecting victims.⁴ In fact, 78% of people report believing that masked officers are more likely to be impersonators.⁵ These instances are likely to continue so long as the practice goes unchecked. Even the FBI has said so: in a bulletin released last fall, it recounted multiple instances of impersonation crimes, and urged law enforcement agencies to cease concealing their identities.⁶

³ *Id.*

⁴ See, e.g., Lisa Desjardins & Andrew Corkery, Rise of ICE Agents Wearing Masks Creates Opportunity for Imposters to Conduct Crimes, PBS News (July 27, 2025, at 17:35 ET), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/rise-of-ice-agents-wearing-masks-creates-opportunity-for-imposters-to-conduct-crimes>; Artemis Moshtagian, Gloria Pazmino & Nick Valencia, Multiple ICE Impersonation Arrests Made During Nationwide Immigration Crackdown, CNN (Feb. 5, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/04/us/ice-impersonators-on-the-rise-arrests-made-as-authorities-issue-national-warning>.

⁵ USIPC Report, *supra* n.2.

⁶ See Rebecca Beitsch, "FBI urges ICE to identify themselves as criminals impersonate officers," The Hill, Nov. 5, 2025, <https://thehill.com/policy/national-security/5590694-fbi-ice-masks-dhs/>.

C. Masking is not necessary to legitimate routine law enforcement.

Masking is not necessary to carry out enforcement operations. In fact, ICE has been carrying out their duties *unmasked* for decades.

In the narrow circumstances where some sort of face covering may be legitimately necessary to a law enforcement officer's carrying out of their duties (if, for example, hazardous chemicals are present), the bill provides exceptions.

While requiring law enforcement to operate unmasked is just one step necessary to protect our communities, it is a crucial step toward mitigating fear and restoring community trust. Now is the time for Maryland to take decisive action. **We Are CASA urges the committee to provide a favorable report on HB 155.**

HB0155 Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: sharlimar douglass

Position: FAV



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.

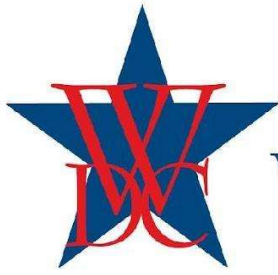
For Black families and immigrant communities who already face disproportionate and often traumatic contact with law enforcement, the ability to see, identify, and document who is at their door is not a procedural nicety — it is a civil rights protection. HB 155 aligns Maryland law with the values the 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
Education Justice Advocate & Analyst
Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE)

HB 0155 FAV - WDC Testimony - 24 Feb 2026.pdf

Uploaded by: Shelby Harper

Position: FAV



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

www.womensdemocraticclub.org

HB 0155 Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings
Judiciary Committee, February 24, 2026
SUPPORT

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2026 legislative session. Founded in 1956, WDC is one of Maryland's largest and most active Democratic clubs with hundreds of politically active members, including many elected officials. WDC is known for its advocacy for law and policy to improve the lives of women and their families.

WDC urges swift passage of **HB 0155 Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings**. WDC believes it is critical that Maryland advance legislation that prohibits federal immigration officers and agents from wearing masks that conceal their identity and that requires them to show their identification and agency-identifying insignia. This legislation is necessary to protect the public, ensure accountability, and preserve the reputation and effectiveness of law enforcement at every level of government. It makes Maryland families safer.

[Masked ICE officers and Border Patrol agents are assaulting U.S. communities with sweeping and chaotic military-style actions. For the past year, we have been bombarded with images and videos of masked, armed federal law enforcement officers, terrorizing our nation's communities.](#) They are often dressed in plain clothes and travel in unmarked vehicles. [They snatch people from streets, apartments, stores, and restaurants.](#) They arrest and detain people – U.S. citizens and non-citizens alike -- based on skin color, as demonstrated by ICE and Border Patrol [stopping and detaining citizens of Native American tribes in Minneapolis and along the southern border.](#) [ICE and Border Patrol aren't going after criminals; they are brutalizing anyone who they perceive to be in their way, including journalists and peaceful protesters,](#) perhaps to meet their [daily quotas](#). They assault unarmed people, firing tear gas and sound grenades in American streets. In January, masked ICE officers shot and killed Renee Good in broad daylight, and two experienced Border Patrol agents fatally shot Alex Pretti, a nurse with the Veterans Administration, [both of which the Administration swiftly defended.](#)

Here in Maryland, heavily armed, masked men without clear identification have inflicted violence and fear on state residents, including [an incident near a Silver Spring middle school](#), [a confrontation against a Montgomery County Council member in Adelphi](#), and [targeted attacks in Silver Spring and Takoma Park](#). MoCo IRC reports that it is providing support to 62 families of the kidnapped, which is up from 48 families two weeks ago.

A prohibition on federal immigration officers and agents from wearing face coverings that conceal their identity and a requirement that they show their identification and agency-identifying insignia protects the public safety by affording transparency and accountability. It encourages public trust and deters federal law enforcement from engaging in the violation of rights, including First Amendment, Fourth Amendment, and due process.

WDC applauds the sponsors for introducing legislation to protect Maryland residents from the reign of terror inflicted by ICE and Border Patrol. We ask for your support for **HB 0155 Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings** and strongly urge swift passage.

Cynthia Rubenstein
WDC President

Shelby Settles Harper
WDC Immigration Subcommittee

Kate Stein
WDC Advocacy Chair

HB155 - Face Coverings.pdf

Uploaded by: Stella Leung

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable

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

House Judiciary Committee

February 20, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair J. Sandy Bartlett, Vice Chair Debra M. Davis, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Stella Leung, and I am a resident of Baltimore, Maryland. I am writing in support of HB0155/SB0001 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.

I support this bill because I believe accountability is essential to legitimate law enforcement, and the visibility of officers' and ICE agents' identities plays a crucial role in that. When you are confident that your actions are not harmful and that your behavior toward fellow human beings is not deplorable, you know there is no reason to hide behind a mask.

Bank robbers, rapists, and other criminals who intend to escape punishment for their actions hide behind masks. Wearing masks doesn't make ICE safer. In fact, it creates less safe conditions because the public can't distinguish federal law enforcement from any other criminal who might don a mask.

That's why it is important for public safety that ICE officers can be identified. Without visible identification and uniform standards, fear and public distrust of law enforcement increase, as does limited accountability for their actions. Furthermore, community members are more likely to intervene if they watch someone being attacked or kidnapped by a masked, unmarked group. There's no way to know whether someone is an ICE officer or impersonating one.

Our local law enforcement officers are easily identifiable. We should not be allowing armed individuals with masks to intimidate and frighten communities with impunity.

I urge you to vote in favor of HB155/SB0001 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings for transparency and safety.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Stella Leung

2.20.26 HB155 OPD Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Stephanie Wolf

Position: FAV



NATASHA DARTIGUE
PUBLIC DEFENDER

KEITH LOTRIDGE
DEPUTY PUBLIC DEFENDER

HANNIBAL KEMERER
CHIEF OF STAFF

ELIZABETH HILLIARD
DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

BILL: HB155 Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

FROM: Maryland Office of the Public Defender

POSITION: Favorable

DATE: February 20, 2026

The Maryland Office of the Public Defender respectfully requests that the Committee issue a favorable report on HB155, limiting the use of masks by law enforcement agents operating in Maryland.

Over the last year, the use of full face masks by federal law enforcement officers engaged in immigration enforcement has become widespread, often paired with a highly militarized style of dress and equipment, and a conspicuous disregard for the 4th Amendment. The terror and desperation that this style of aggressive, militarized enforcement has caused is not conducive to safe and peaceful communities. Masked anonymity for law enforcement agents encourages a sense of impunity and separation, rather than promoting connection and deescalation; masks thereby increase the risks to everyone involved. Prohibiting the use of masks by law enforcement in most circumstances is one common-sense step towards promoting accountability and ultimately fostering safer and more humane interactions between law enforcement agents and Maryland residents.

This bill is useful not only in its applicability to the federal agents, but also in its broad applicability to Maryland law enforcement. If Maryland law enforcement agencies wish to continue to build trust across the state in order to do their work effectively, they must distance themselves clearly and decisively from their counterparts engaged in federal immigration enforcement. Prohibiting the use of masks, which have become associated with some of the worst abuses by immigration authorities, is one powerful way to assert that Maryland's law enforcement officers are not faceless outsiders who answer to no one, but rather identifiable human beings, members of the

communities that they police, who carry out their duties while remaining accountable to the system and the people that they serve.

For these reasons, the Maryland Office of the Public Defender urges this Committee to issue a favorable report on HB155.

Submitted by: Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Government Relations Division.

Authored by: Stephanie Wolf, Director of Immigration Services, stephanie.wolf@maryland.gov.

HB155 SSJC fav.pdf

Uploaded by: Susaanti Follingstad

Position: FAV



Testimony on HB 155 - Favorable
HB 155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings
House Judiciary Committee

February 24, 2026

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

Silver Spring Justice Coalition offers **favorable** testimony in support of **HB-155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings**.

The Silver Spring Justice Coalition is an organization of community members, faith groups, and civil and human rights organizations from throughout Montgomery County that works to reduce the presence of police in our communities; eliminate violence and harm by police; establish transparency and accountability; and redirect public funds toward community needs.

This bill is about upholding Maryland's values—fairness, dignity, and justice for all. This bill affirms that our state should not be in the business of terrorizing families and individuals, undermining public trust, and allowing state, local, and federal law enforcement to hide behind masks. Instead, Maryland should remain focused on community safety by prohibiting law enforcement officials from using masks solely to hide their identity.

Our immigrant community is under siege by federal government actions. Places in Montgomery County that used to bustle are empty and quiet because immigrants (and some who might be perceived as immigrants) are afraid to venture out for fear of a chance encounter with federal officials or local law enforcement. Immigrants are having food delivered by local mutual aid groups, getting others to take their children to school (or keeping them home), setting up Standby Guardianship for their children in case the parents are detained or deported, and even afraid to answer their phones or open their door to anyone they do not know.

Allowing law enforcement to hide behind face masks, simply increases the terror of law enforcement encounters and distrust of engaging with law enforcement. Such distrust leads immigrants to not report crimes or serve as witnesses, which makes all of us less safe.

Thus it is vital that the State promote the safety of all and minimize the risks immigrants face by prohibiting law enforcement from using masks to hide behind.

As part of the Maryland Immigrant Justice Table, along with CASA, we support a clean bill which will increase safety for all of us by prohibiting law enforcement at all levels from using masks to hide their identity. This is what will bring Maryland closer to our values.

For these reasons, the **Silver Spring Justice Coalition** adamantly urges the Senate Judiciary Committee to issue a **favorable report** on **HB 155**.

Susaanti Follingstad
Silver Spring Justice Coalition Steering Committee
Rockville MD 20851

Azrin_Testimony on House Bill – Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Susan Azrin

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable

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

Judiciary Committee

February 20, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair J. Sandy Bartlett, Vice Chair Debra M. Davis, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Susan Azrin and I am writing in support of SB0001 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.

When I report into work, I do not wear a mask to hide my identity. If a colleague or customer I interact with has any issues with my actions, they will be able to clearly identify who I am. Heck, I'll even give them my name. When you are confident that your actions are not harmful and your behavior towards fellow human beings is not deplorable, you know that there is no reason to hide behind a mask.

You know who does hide behind masks? Bank robbers, rapists, and other criminals who have the intent of escaping punishment for their actions. ICE isn't made safer by wearing masks. They are actually creating less safe conditions because the public isn't able to differentiate federal law enforcement from any other criminal who might don a mask.

That's why 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. Furthermore, community members are more likely to intervene if they watch someone being attacked or kidnapped by a masked, unmarked group. There's no way to know if someone is an ICE officer or if they are impersonating an ICE officer.

Our local law enforcement officers are easily identifiable. We should not be allowing armed individuals with masks to intimidate and frighten communities with impunity.

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.

Sincerely,

Susan Azrin

18809 Bloomfield Rd, Olney, MD 20832

Takoma Park 2026 - HB 155 FAV - Prohibition on Fac

Uploaded by: Talisha Searcy

Position: FAV



CITY TAKOMA OF PARK MARYLAND

Support House Bill 155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings
House Judiciary Committee, February 24, 2026

The City of Takoma Park supports and urges favorable consideration of this bill. House Bill 155 calls for the development and implementation of a state policy that prohibits law enforcement officers from local, state, or federal government agencies from wearing face coverings that conceal or obscure their identity. However, the bill also allows for carefully delineated exceptions necessary to enable law enforcement agents to do their jobs in specific circumstances.

The City of Takoma Park is a municipality of almost 18,000 people living within 2.4 square miles in Montgomery County, along the Washington, D.C. border. We are a highly diverse community and approximately a third of our residents were born outside of the U.S. Our city has worked diligently to build trust between our local police department and our immigrant community so that residents feel comfortable reporting crime and calling on our local police for help.

In the past year, the City of Takoma Park has experienced increased federal immigration enforcement activity. Federal immigration agents are often masked, not wearing any agency insignia or identification, and in unmarked cars. As a result, residents are unable to decipher between authorized federal immigration enforcement officers and a group of armed persons kidnapping community members. This lack of transparency threatens public safety and the well-being of all our residents. More importantly, it destroys residents' trust in local law enforcement.

House Bill 155 is a key step forward to ensure consistency in law enforcement activities across all levels of government. Marylanders should be able to expect that all law enforcement officers—federal, state, and local—are clearly identifiable and accountable when performing their duties.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." The use of tactics that unnecessarily conceal the identities of federal immigration officers during their duties constitutes an injustice. We support the prompt enactment of this bill into law, and swift action by the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to develop the necessary implementing policy. Legitimate law enforcement should be able to operate in the open and have nothing to hide.

City Contact: Talisha Searcy, Mayor
talishas@takomaparkmd.gov

HB155 - Face Coverings.pdf

Uploaded by: Tatiana Santos

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable

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

Judiciary Committee

February 20, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Delegate J. Sandy Bartlett, Vice Chair Delegate Debra Davis, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tatiana Santos and I am writing in support of SB0001 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.

When I report into work, I do not wear a mask to hide my identity. If a colleague or customer I interact with has any issues with my actions, they will be able to clearly identify who I am. Heck, I'll even give them my name. When you are confident that your actions are not harmful and your behavior towards fellow human beings is not deplorable, you know that there is no reason to hide behind a mask.

You know who does hide behind masks? Bank robbers, rapists, and other criminals who have the intent of escaping punishment for their actions. ICE isn't made safer by wearing masks. They are actually creating unsafe conditions because the public isn't able to differentiate federal law enforcement from any other criminal who might don a mask.

That's why 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. Furthermore, community members are more likely to intervene if they watch someone being attacked or kidnapped by a masked, unmarked group. There's no way to know if someone is an ICE officer or if they are impersonating an ICE officer.

Our local law enforcement officers are easily identifiable. We should not be allowing armed individuals with masks to intimidate and frighten communities with impunity.

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,

Tatiana Santos

HB155 - Ban LE face covering_TH.pdf

Uploaded by: Theresa M. Hoffman

Position: FAV

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 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 43b, and the sister of a retired law enforcement officer. **I am testifying in support of HB155 - 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 police officers to identify themselves by name, agency, and badge number when approaching a citizen for a traffic stop or other investigation.

Throughout 2025, we saw copious news coverage of federal law enforcement actions conducted by officers wearing street clothes and balaclavas. The fact that incidents of police impersonation have been on the rise in Maryland and nationally is not a coincidence: when it becomes impossible to determine who is a legitimate law enforcement officer, criminals can more plausibly claim to be police by simply putting on a mask, no fake uniform or badge required. Even the FBI has recognized the danger, circulating a bulletin to law enforcement agencies in October 2025 to warn that criminals were taking advantage of routine mask-wearing by law enforcement to disguise themselves as ICE agents.¹ This confusion also makes routine law enforcement operations more dangerous. 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 decisions that endanger everyone involved.

HB155 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 it would require law enforcement agencies operating in Maryland to adopt that policy or its equivalent. 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 HB155, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Theresa M. Hoffman
803 Seaward Rd., Towson, MD 21286
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

¹ Cameron, Dell & Haskins, Caroline, "FBI warns of criminals posing as ICE, urges agents to ID themselves." WIRED Magazine, Nov. 4, 2025. <https://www.wired.com/story/fbi-warns-of-criminals-posing-as-ice-urges-agents-to-id-themselves/>

SWASC - HB 155 - Masks - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: UM SWASC

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 155
Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings
Judiciary Committee
February 24, 2026

Social Work Advocates for Social Change strongly supports HB 155, which requires the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to develop a model policy to prohibit the use of a face covering by law enforcement officers in the course of duty, and requires that law enforcement agencies operating in Maryland shall adopt a policy consistent with this model.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers wearing face coverings have been operating in Maryland in rising numbers over the past 12 months. As indicated by the Governor's Office for Immigrant Affairs data, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of ICE personnel and intensity of their actions in the community: the total number of ICE arrests statewide nearly tripled in 2025 – with the number of weekly arrests increasingly significantly in recent months. The monthly number of immigration-related arrests in 2025 compared to 2024 has increased more than threefold in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Montgomery County; in Prince George's Country, the average monthly arrests have multiplied by over 600% during this period.ⁱ

Law enforcement officers concealing their identity breaks community trust and undermines community safety. It is the duty of public servants to maintain transparency and accountability, and experts argue the increasingly widespread use of masks by law enforcement “symbolized the drift of law enforcement away from democratic controls.”ⁱⁱ ICE's lack of clear identification as public servants when conducting operations inhibits accountability for harmful actions if excessive use of force were to occur. The use of masks by ICE agents undermines the legitimacy of law enforcement, which makes policing more difficult and dangerous, for both community members and other officers may mistake them. It also leaves community members vulnerable to civilians impersonating ICE agents with the intent to commit crimes.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Maryland General Assembly has recognized that effective law enforcement requires trust and accountability, and, in 2021, passed the Maryland Police Accountability Act. Maryland must continue to build a relationship of trust and transparency between law enforcement and our community members. Maryland State Attorney General Anthony Brown's October 2025 guidance to state agencies when working with federal agents clarifies key standards and protocols for Maryland officers, such as using body cameras and identifying themselves when making stops. HB 155's mask ban for law enforcement officers is consistent with the other protocols stated in the guidance and does not differ in scope and relevance. **At a moment when federal leadership is emboldening ICE to act with impunity, it is imperative that Maryland leaders continue to set clear expectations for the conduct of law enforcement in our state.**



For more information, please contact
Jazz Bellard or VL Buzdygon
umswasc@gmail.com

As you consider the Senate amendments in the cross-file of HB 155, we support the added amendments requiring a “uniform” policy that is required “to be used by each law enforcement agency” to ensure consistency across the state and agencies. **We are, however, concerned by the amendments that make violations a civil offense insofar as civil penalties place the onus on victims to bring a case against a law enforcement officer who has committed misconduct.** Because ICE often transfers those it apprehends to unknown locations where they cannot be contacted by family and community supports, we are concerned that such amendments will make it more difficult to hold members of law enforcement accountable, thereby weakening public safety standards. We urge the committee to not conform HB 155 with this provision of its amended Senate cross-file.

HB 155’s exceptions for medical masks, safety gear for environmental protections, and face coverings specifically for undercover work ensure that both the safety of law enforcement officers and the communities they serve are upheld. As rising social workers, we are committed to protecting the dignity and safety of our community members.

Social Work Advocates for Social Change urges a favorable report on HB 155. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Social Work Advocates for Social Change is a coalition of MSW students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work that seeks to promote equity and justice through public policy, and to engage the communities impacted by public policy in the policymaking process.

ⁱ Essaheb, K. (Jan 12, 2025). Immigration: Enforcement trends [Presentation]. Maryland Association of Nonprofits Legislative Preview.

ⁱⁱ Levin, S. (June 25, 2025). The alarming rise of US officers hiding behind masks: “a police state”. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jun/25/immigration-officers-wearing-masks>

ⁱⁱⁱ Preston, A. (August 28, 2025). Masked and unidentifiable: the risks of federal law enforcement operating without identification. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/masked-and-unidentifiable-the-risks-of-federal-law-enforcement-operating-without-identification/>

FAVORABLE HB0155_Valerie Hodge-Williams.pdf

Uploaded by: Val Hodge-Williams

Position: FAV

Testimony on Senate Bill – Favorable
HB0155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings

House Judicial Committee

February 24th, 2026

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

My name is Valerie Hodge-Williams, and I am a resident of Garrett County, Maryland. I am writing in support of **HB0155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings**

Every day, our local Sheriff's officers wear identifying uniforms and bodycams to serve and protect our community. They know that transparency, accountability, and community trust are essential in their work. If ICE officers are masked and indistinguishable from vigilantes, we are all less safe. Individuals are more likely to refuse to comply, escalating situations unnecessarily. Onlookers are more likely to intervene if they watch someone being attacked or kidnapped by a masked, unmarked group. There's no way to know if someone is simply impersonating an ICE officer. Furthermore, there's increased risk of "blue-on-blue" incidents, when a officer accidentally shooting another officer, with unidentifiable agents.

In other communities, there's been more vigilantes and dangerous impersonations since masked ICE raids escalated (as reported by the Nonpartisan Center for American Progress <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/masked-and-unidentifiable-the-risks-of-federal-law-enforcement-operating-without-identification/>).

Unmasking improves public safety for residents as well as local officers.

I urge you to vote in favor of HB0155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings for transparency and safety.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Late testimony

Uploaded by: Valerie Hirsch

Position: FAV

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable

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

Judiciary Committee

[DATE]

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

My name is Valerie Hirsch and I am writing in support of SB0001 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.

When you are confident that your actions are not harmful and your behavior towards fellow human beings is not deplorable, you know that there is no reason to hide behind a mask.

You know who does hide behind masks? Bank robbers, rapists, and other criminals who have the intent of escaping punishment for their actions. ICE isn't made safer by wearing masks. They are actually creating less safe conditions because the public isn't able to differentiate federal law enforcement from any other criminal who might don a mask.

That's why 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. Furthermore, community members are more likely to intervene if they watch someone being attacked or kidnapped by a masked, unmarked group. There's no way to know if someone is an ICE officer or if they are impersonating an ICE officer.

Our local law enforcement officers are easily identifiable. We should not be allowing armed individuals with masks to intimidate and frighten communities with impunity.

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.

HB0155_fav_mascioli.pdf

Uploaded by: William Mascioli

Position: FAV

HB0155 - SUPPORT
William Mascioli
2021 Luzerne Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

B3mascioli@verizon.net
301.404.7490

HB0155– Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings

House Judiciary Committee
February 24, 2026

Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the Committee:

My name is William Mascioli. I've lived in Silver Spring for forty years. I am among a group of neighbors who last year formed North Woodside Civil Resistance out of concern for the threat to our democracy posed by the actions of the Trump administration. I'm writing to express my strong support for HB0155, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings.

We are at a truly alarming moment in our country. There's been a lot of talk about what to call this administration's actions – authoritarianism, neo-royalism – sadly, even fascism no longer seems a great stretch. Whatever the label, the elements are clear: unbridled military aggression, suppression of dissent, scapegoating of vulnerable groups, and celebration of violence.

A War Department pamphlet produced for U.S. Army personnel in WWII is troublingly relevant today. According to "Fascism!", produced in March 1945, the first technique fascists would use to gain power in the U.S. would be to break down national unity by a "well-planned 'hate campaign' against minority races, religions, and other groups." It's hard not to see this now, as masked, unaccountable thugs viciously attack our immigrant neighbors—and our neighbors who, judging by their skin color or language appear to be immigrants-- all while slandering them as violent criminals and heaping the most vile epithets upon them. Videos of brutal apprehensions are posted on governmental social media accounts, as if for entertainment.

Of course, there are limits to what any individual state can do to restrain the actions of the federal government, no matter how lawless. But if we stand up for our Maryland values, for *American* values, we can throw sand in the gears of the repressive machine and inspire other states to do the same.

Marylanders are taking a stand every day in the streets, parks, and highway overpasses all over the state, even as the Trump administration makes clear that peaceful protesters are also their targets. This body, too, must take a stand.

Unaccountable law enforcement is the essence of a police state. At a bare minimum, this body should insist that those empowered to detain individuals in our state publicly identify themselves. There is no room for masked gunmen doing the government's bidding in a democracy.

Nor is there room for a secret police in a democracy. HB0155 properly demands that law enforcement *not* wear masks. If anything, I wish the bill went further, to require that all security forces operating in the state *clearly identify themselves by name, number, and agency*.

In addition to the troubling lack of accountability that masked officers represent, they also constitute a grave danger to public security. Criminal impersonation of law enforcement officers is a threat that needs to be acknowledged, as we became acutely aware last year when an individual dressed as a police officer murdered a Minnesota lawmaker and her husband and fired upon another lawmaker and his wife.

Public safety is best served when individuals can more quickly and clearly verify officers' identities, not the other way around. Maryland law must make clear that masked, unidentified individuals with guns are operating outside the law. I believe that HB0155 is a step in the right direction toward achieving these goals and therefore urge a favorable report. Thank you for your consideration.

HB0155_TogetherWeWillHarfordCountyIndivisible_FAV.

Uploaded by: Ydelka Schrock

Position: FAV

January 24, 2026

Ydelka A. Schrock
Aberdeen Proving Ground, 21005

TESTIMONY ON HB0155 – IN SUPPORT

Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Covering

TO: Chair Delegate J. Sandy Bartlett, Vice Chair Delegate Debra Davis, and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Ydelka A. Schrock

My name is Ydelka A. Schrock. I am a resident of Harford County District 34A. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB0155, Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Covering, on behalf of Together We Will Harford County Indivisible (TWW). TWW is an inclusive and diverse group of 500 regular members, with over 1,000 followers on social media, working together to create a just community that empowers individuals to participate in our democracy and stand up for social, racial, and economic justice to create a place where all can thrive.

The success of the United States comes, from our longstanding tradition of encouraging people seeking a better life to leave everything they know and contribute to our Country. Immigrants both documented and undocumented have played a crucial role in enriching our economy, fostering innovation, and enhancing the cultural diversity which plays a vital role in the societal development of the United States. Now they are being scapegoated and demonized.

In America we continue to see images of our neighbors being grabbed off the streets by masked, armed men, and taken away to unknown locations bearing a fearsome resemblance to the oppressive tactics of authoritarian regimes, not a democratic one. ICE and CBP agents who wear masks and fail to wear identification, instill fear and distrust in the community and exhibit a lack of accountability when their actions become aggressively violent. Transparency and accountability are essential, and law enforcement should serve openly and honestly, not in secrecy or deception.

Our greatness comes from the coalescence of the multigenerational immigrants from all over the world that reside in this country. Just as police show their faces during an arrest, ICE and CBP agents should be required to clearly identify themselves and have their faces visible.

On behalf of TWW, I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB0155.

J Horvath HB 155 Judiciary Comm testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: jane horvath

Position: FWA

**Testimony of Jane Horvath, Prince George’s County Resident
State and Local Work Group Lead, Indivisible Route 1 Corridor Chapter
Concerning HB 155
Before the House Judiciary Committee**

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Reasons to Support HB 155

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of HB 155 which would ban the use of face coverings by any law enforcement officers and agents operating in Maryland, even if they do not operate under the aegis of Maryland state, county, or local law enforcement. Law enforcement officers, when operating here, are subject to Maryland laws on a whole variety of issues that do not run counter to the U.S. Constitution, nor federal agency laws and regulations.¹

Banning law enforcement face masks in all but certain situations – as specified in the bill – is important. There has been extensive national coverage since late spring of 2025 of de-identified, masked federal agents operating without accountability. Criminals would have to work hard to avoid seeing the news coverage of lack of ICE accountability.

Masks create fear and uncertainty – as intended. Masks hide identity – as intended. When law enforcement at any level masks up, it creates fear and uncertainty in whole communities. Criminality thrives on victim fear and uncertainty. Criminality thrives when law enforcement can be impersonated and also be completely de-identified with a face covering and fake credentials, or no credentials at all.

There is increasing concern among law enforcement agencies around the country about the growing threat of officer or agency impersonation.² Even the FBI is concerned; the media has widely reported on a leaked memo from the FBI to the federal Department of Homeland Security (DHS), asking DHS to change or limit immigration agent use of masks and to require agents to present valid agent identification *because agent impersonators are committing crimes*.³ But the masking and impersonation is not limited to Immigration and Customs Enforcement or Border Control. Maryland State and local police are being impersonated as well, many now with the use of masks.⁴ A simple web search produced five media reports of crimes in Maryland perpetrated by law enforcement impersonators -- most in the last year.⁵ These are not victimless crimes.

- Masked law enforcement makes communities unsafe when people are uncertain if an officer is legitimate.

¹ Federal law does not require nor incentivize the use of face coverings for immigration agents. Federal law requires agents to identify themselves as soon as possible.

² *Badges of Deceit: Why Police Impersonation is a Growing National Security Risk: How extremists have exploited police identity to gain access, sow chaos, and erode trust in the state.* July 15, 2025, **Counter Extremism Project**
The 'deeply troubling' trend of law enforcement impersonation June 24, 2025. **MN Public Radio**

“Law enforcement agencies across the country are sounding the alarm after a series of troubling cases involving criminals [impersonating](#) police officers have surfaced.” September 10, 2025, **Law Enforcement Today**

ICE Raids Are Breeding Dangerous Imitators and Social Division. December 28, 2025. **Harvard Political Review**

“Getting in front of the police masking controversy.” Karl Bickel August 6, 2025. **Maryland Matters. Former Frederick County Sheriff**

³ WIRED magazine. <https://www.wired.com/story/fbi-warns-of-criminals-posing-as-ice-urges-agents-to-id-themselves/>

⁴ An excellent summary of reported 26 ICE impersonator crimes in 2025-2026 can be found on [Wikipedia](#).

⁵ Incidents of policy impersonations in Maryland include Salisbury MD (2/25), Bowie MD (4/25), Montgomery County (9/25), Beltsville (10/25), and Oxon Hill (6/23).

- Masking harms legitimate law enforcement when community trust in police erodes as a result of impersonators or masked officials.

Except for circumstances delineated in the legislation, when a law enforcement officer covers their face to limit identification, it can create the perception that the officer is trying to limit personal accountability. This perception (or reality) can create real problems in the interaction between the officer and the community.

Masking facilitates criminality and we need not facilitate criminality and community fear. A ban on masking will not solve all impersonation, but it can stop the current trend of using masks. A ban will give individuals a quick first tool to spot a fraud. A ban on masks improves accountability for unlawful behavior.

Technical Issues That Could Increase Legal Vulnerability

I would like to suggest two important changes to the legislation that could make the bill stronger in the event of a legal challenge by the federal government or other states.

Item 1 Requiring out-of-state law enforcement agencies to have formal policies that comport with Maryland policy

3-207(P) (3): A LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS OPERATING IN THE STATE SHALL ADOPT A POLICY CONSISTENT WITH THE MODEL POLICY DEVELOPED BY THE COMMISSION UNDER PARAGRAPH (2) OF THIS SUBSECTION.

If the intent of HB 155 is to require specific policy adoption by law enforcement agencies outside of Maryland, the provision might be challenged by the federal government as a violation of the Supremacy Clause or by other states using other legal standards. I suggest that the Committee adopt the amendments included in SB 1 which address this concern.

Item 2 Use of the terms “tactical mask” and “tactical operations”

The use of the word “tactical” is somewhat confusing. The bill prohibits a “tactical mask” face covering. A quick web search of tactical mask includes all the face coverings permitted under the bill. And a tactical mask includes a balaclava and neck gaiter, which are separately not permitted face coverings. The real confusion is that the bill permits unspecified face coverings when worn for protection during “tactical’ operations.” A tactical operation could be considered to be what ICE currently does.

The critical insight is that a "tactical" operation is defined less by the action itself and more by its relationship to a larger goal. It is a single, calculated step in a much longer journey, executed with precision to serve a broader strategy.

<https://jihua3515.com/faqs/what-are-tactical-operations-and-what-do-they-encompass>

The law would be clearer if 3-535(A)(2)(III)(8) – allowing unspecified gear to be used in tactical operations – were deleted. It is not necessary since all the clearly specified permitted items are also considered tactical gear and do not need the additional permission of (8) to be used. Keeping provision (8) raises the question of what it means; can neck gaiters be worn under provision (8)? If (8) is stricken, all permissible uses of and permissible types of face coverings/tactical gear are clear while all impermissible tactical gear is also clear.

How HB 155 Differs from the California No Vigilantes Act (CA SB 627)

The Federal 9th Circuit Court recently found that California anti-masking law, CA SB 627, illegally discriminated against federal immigration enforcement agents by applying the unmasking law to federal agents and not State law enforcement, the federal government also claimed the law violate the Supremacy Clause of the Constitution. MD HB155 is different from the California law in some important respects that can mitigate the success of a federal challenge.

- MD HB 155 applies to *all* State and local law enforcement agencies in addition to out of state agents operating in our State.
- The federal government charged that CA SB627 regulates the actions of federal departments and agencies by requiring that all federal law enforcement entities adopt agency policies that comport with the California masking law. A federal challenge on the basis of the Supremacy Clause can be mitigated by the changes made to Senate bill 1.

Summary

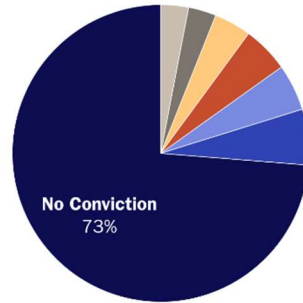
The House Judiciary Committee has before it a number of important and innovative policies to protect Marylanders from the needlessly unconstitutional, dangerous, and harmful results of immigration enforcement activity. Requiring identified and identifiable federal agents is key among those policies. Unmasking is part of an array of necessary measures to address both federal activity and the growth of criminal impersonation of State and local law enforcement. Importantly, we should fully expect immigration enforcement in Maryland to ramp up substantially in the near future with its own illegalities and causing growth of state and local law enforcement impersonation. *Proactive* action from this Committee and the Generally Assembly will be important in preparing for, and managing, the chaos that federal immigration enforcement seems to thrive on.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and most importantly, for your efforts to ensure justice for Maryland residents.

Only 5 percent of individuals booked into ICE detention had a violent criminal conviction

ICE book-ins into custody, FY 2026, Oct 1 - Nov 15, 2025

Property Vice Other Violent Immigration Traffic No Conviction



Source: Immigration and Customs Enforcement, "ICE Initial Book-Ins by Criminality and MSC: FY2025 YTD," November 15, 2025. See Appendix Table A for classifications. Convictions include convictions at any time, not just during the period listed.



Appendix: Use-Of-Force Standards in the Context of the US Supreme Court Decision in *Loper Bright v Raimondo*

In general, federal law enforcement agencies, such as the FBI, have use-of-force rules, guidance, and training similar to state and local use-of-force rules, guidance, and training. DHS Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Border Patrol agencies stand out for having much lower standards, guidance, and training. We see in real time around the country that lower standards result in unnecessary injury and death, civil rights violations, chaos, and community upheaval.

There are myriad federal court decisions that have done extensive damage law enforcement accountability and thus to our civil rights over recent decades. DHS policy and practice make this erosion even more significant; citizens are unfairly treated by federal agents and have less and less recourse in the courts. Recourse for states and localities attempting to rein in federal law enforcement excesses is also hobbled.

To the best of my knowledge, what states and localities have not tried to use against increasingly lawless but heavily armed DHS agents and agencies is the US Supreme Court decision of *Loper Bright Enterprises v Raimondo* (2024). The decision threw out decades of jurisprudence where the courts deferred to federal agency expertise to interpret and implement laws. The *Loper Bright* decision establishes a new schema in which the Courts will decide the appropriate interpretation of law when the implementing agency interpretation is challenged.

Loper Bright has generally concerned issues related to administrative rules affecting commerce. The question is whether it can be used to challenge DHS administrative rules and guidance for immigration enforcement.

Clearly there is a rather wide range of interpretation across federal law enforcement agencies on the use of force. Most federal agents are not allowed to regularly shoot people sitting in their cars, most agents are not allowed to arrest or murder US citizens, or documented immigrants with no criminal violations; certainly, most federal agents are not allowed to harm undocumented migrants who have committed no criminal activity. DHS seems to misunderstand the legal difference between hardened criminals who are immigrants (the 'worst of the worst' as stated in their current deportation mission) and

- mothers of small children,
- small children,
- US citizens,
- migrants with legal standing to be in the US, and
- migrants with misdemeanor violations of specific immigration law.

Actual immigrants with criminal conviction are only 5% of those detained, deported, shot, or murdered by DHS agents. This level and scope of incompetence in following the agency's *stated* mission and the venality of agency agent action is not found at anything near this level in other federal law enforcement agencies nor in state and local law enforcement. This is an interesting result given that all federal, state, and local law enforcement are subject to the US Constitution and the same federal laws.

It is reasonable to assess that there is ambiguity somewhere in the Constitution or federal law that leads to wildly different interpretations of what federal agents are allowed to do. This ambiguity, combined with an utter lack of generally recognized legal expertise in the DHS, and generally acknowledged insufficient agent training/oversight/accountability, produce these failed but dangerous DHS enforcement results.

Almost by definition, the disparity in results among federal law enforcement agencies means there is ambiguity in interpretation of civil rights laws which relate to use of force rules, habeas corpus law, immigration law, laws governing law enforcement agent identification, not to mention operational standards that do or do not allow agents to operate as large bands of roving outlaws. DHS should be challenged.

It may be worthwhile to request that Maryland Attorney General's Office conduct a detailed analysis of how Loper Bright might be of use to challenge the growing ambiguity of DHS interpretation of laws and the resulting degradation of federal law enforcement policy and practice in some of our federal agencies while not in other agencies. The apparent ambiguity in our laws and citizen rights is leading to deadly and other life-altering results for growing numbers of people residing in the U.S. I believe it is worthwhile to at least examine if the expertise and legal actions of the Department of Homeland Security can be challenged based on Loper Bright.

This may be a stretch or not feasible at all, but I implore the Committee and the Executive Branch to make any and all efforts to find ways to constrain the rapid growth of federal executive branch power and lawlessness with goal to protect Maryland residents, civil society, and our democracy.

Councilmember Will Jawando Testimony in Support of

Uploaded by: Will Jawando

Position: FWA



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

WILL JAWANDO
COUNCILMEMBER AT-LARGE
CHAIR, EDUCATION & CULTURE COMMITTEE
PLANNING, HOUSING, AND PARKS COMMITTEE

February 20, 2026

Montgomery County Councilmember Will Jawando
Testimony Supporting HB 155
(Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings)

Dear Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to share my strong support for HB 155 (Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings), which was cross-filed with SB 1, and to share with you information regarding a related bill I introduced recently with strong support in the Montgomery County Council. It is my hope that the state will pass this important legislation to help protect our residents in a time of increasing lawlessness from masked federal immigration enforcement agents.

As you know, throughout history, masks have been used in American law enforcement to shield the wearer from accountability, and used for terror, impunity, and anonymity for violence. Unfortunately, we are now watching history repeating itself before our eyes, as federal immigration enforcement terrorizes communities throughout the United States, including in Montgomery County and other parts of Maryland. The actions of ICE we are witnessing are not about enforcing laws or making our communities safer, but about causing fear through violence and intimidation. We must reject these practices, stand up for our residents and the rule of law, and safeguard our communities as much as possible.

In collaboration with colleagues and with significant community support, I was proud to introduce Bill 5-26, the Unmask ICE Act, in Montgomery County.¹ This bill prohibits any law enforcement officer,

¹ For more information about the Unmask ICE Act, please see: https://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=169&event_id=16687&meta_id=209248. For your information, I am also co-sponsoring the County Values Act, an important piece of complementary legislation introduced by

federal, state, or local, from wearing a mask while interacting with the public in Montgomery County. The legislation includes commonsense exceptions for medical masks, SWAT operations, and emergency situations.

The introduction of this county legislation demonstrates the urgent local need for the protections outlined in HB 155. We cannot wait for federal action or hope that voluntary compliance will protect our residents. By passing HB 155, Maryland would establish a clear statewide standard that reinforces local efforts like ours and ensures consistent protection across all jurisdictions.

Please note that, at my request, a majority of my colleagues on the County Council voted to support this state level legislation. Our county's strong support for this reform shows there is political will for this change, and I urge you to give HB 155 a favorable report so that Maryland can lead the nation on this critical public safety and accountability issue. In addition to amendments to make the bill consistent with the updated SB 1, I suggest amending the bill to require an earlier effective date, given the urgent need for such legislation.

As our local law enforcement recognizes, safety requires trust and trust requires transparency. Our community is calling on us to do more to protect them in these uncertain and worrisome times, and we must listen, work together, and move forward with courage to protect our communities.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony, and I would be happy to discuss the state or county legislative proposals with you if that would be helpful. You may contact me at councilmember.jawando@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Jawando', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Will Jawando

my colleague Councilmember Kristin Mink:

https://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=169&event_id=16687&meta_id=209244

HB0155 Face Coverings UNF-2026.pdf

Uploaded by: Ella Ennis

Position: UNF



February 20, 2026

The Honorable Sandy Bartlett, Chair
and Members of the Judiciary Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
Annapolis, Maryland

Dear Chair Bartlett and Members,

Re: **HB0155** – Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings -- **UNFAVORABLE**

The 1,300 members of the Maryland Federation of Republican Women have serious concerns about and objections to HB0155, that will prohibit the wearing of face coverings by law enforcement officers, including federal law enforcement officers, when performing their official duties. HB0155 makes the wearing of a face covering by a law enforcement officer a criminal offense punishable with two years of imprisonment and a fine of \$2,000.

These provisions are excessive, especially when the same prohibitions have not been applied to the individuals law enforcement professionals will be interacting with -- criminals, increasingly more violent paid agitators and protestors who intentionally harass and obstruct, and others whose sole purpose is to interfere with enforcement of local, state, and federal law.

Law enforcement officers don't make the laws. They swear an oath to uphold the Maryland Constitution, the Constitution of the United States, and all laws enacted by the Maryland General Assembly. Those who object to the enforcement of those laws should be working to change the laws rather than obstructing enforcement.

Many of the violent confrontations and recent unfortunate deaths in Minnesota could have been avoided if reasonable rules had been implemented to address the violent confrontations by the protesters and, more importantly, if existing laws had been enforced (obstructing traffic flow, interfering with law enforcement officers, etc.).

HB0155 derisively dismisses concerns for the safety of law enforcement officers and their families with the provision "that generalized and undifferentiated fear and apprehension about law enforcement officer safety is not sufficient to justify the use of face coverings." Angry protestors outside your home or your child's school is a valid concern and should not be trivialized as "undifferentiated fear and apprehension".

HB0155 was filed as the result of similar "generalized and undifferentiated fear and apprehension". If that is not sufficient rationale for law enforcement officers, how can it be sufficient for violent criminals, agitators, and protesters?

Please give **HB0155** an **UNFAVORABLE** report.

Sincerely,

Ella Ennis
Legislative Co-Chair
(443) 295-3989

Sharon Carrick
Legislative Co-Chair
(301) 464-1954

Oppose HB155.pdf

Uploaded by: Mark Meyerovich

Position: UNF

Oppose HB155

I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to *SB0001 / HB155*, which seeks to prohibit law enforcement officers from wearing certain “*face coverings*” while performing their duties in Maryland. While public safety is a legitimate concern, the language of this bill is overbroad, ambiguous, and invites arbitrary application, raising constitutional and practical problems.

1. The Bill’s Definition of “Face Covering” Is Overbroad and Vague

Under Section 3–535 of the bill, the term “*face covering*” is defined as:

“any opaque mask, garment, helmet, headgear, or other item that conceals or obscures the face... including a balaclava, ski mask, neck gaiter, or tactical mask.”

This definition pulls together a wide range of things that people wear for very different purposes. Visually, conceptually, and in real-world use these items can look remarkably similar and are often used interchangeably. For example:





4

In everyday life, people might wear:

- a **neck gaiter** when cold,
- a **balaclava** while motorcycling or skiing,
- a **tactical mask** for occupational safety,
- a **ski mask** as part of cold weather gear.

All can conceal the face, but context matters. Grouping these together without clear limits invites discretionary enforcement.

2. The Bill Treats Functionally Similar Items Differently

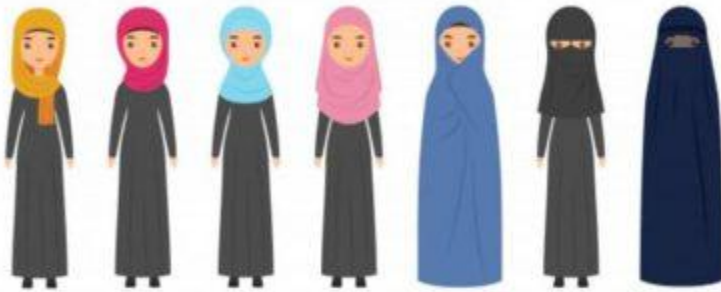
The bill's exceptions carve out certain items (e.g., *medical-grade or surgical masks, clear face shields, religious garments, protective gear*), but this distinction is not inherently obvious to a neutral observer. For example:

HINGED DESIGN

VERSATILE WEAR OPTIONS FROM
NECK GAITER TO SKI MASK



Types of Islamic Veils



Shayla

Hijab

Hijab Amira

Khimar

Chador

Niqab

Burqa

Face coverings worn for safety purposes can look very much like *tactical masks* but are used to protect workers:



- **Balaclava-style safety masks** — used in cold-weather work, chimney or roofing jobs, and industrial settings.
- **Flame-resistant balaclava/ppe** — protects skin and face from heat, sparks, or chemicals.

The line between a medical mask and simple cloth covering, or between an opaque buffalo-plaid winter face covering and a tactical balaclava, can be subtle. Ambiguous language like “opaque” or “conceals” invites subjective judgments by officers or reviewers, increasing the risk of unequal enforcement.

3. The Bill Dictates Personal Appearance and Policing Tactics

Prohibiting officers from wearing items that obscure their face raises separate concerns:

- **Operational Safety:** Officers may need face coverings for legitimate safety reasons (e.g., chemical exposure scenarios, riot control, unknown threat environments).
- **Constitutional Rights:** Limiting attire tied to identity or expression could implicate free speech and equal protection, especially if the rule is applied differently in different jurisdictions or contexts.

Law enforcement agencies already draft operational policies under careful review, training, and community oversight. Mandating uniform dress restrictions from Annapolis removes local discretion without evidence that current practices are broken.

4. The Bill's Justification Is Poorly Linked to Actual Public Safety Needs

The bill's stated intent is to promote transparency and public trust by discouraging officers from concealing their faces. However:

1. Transparency can be achieved through **identification badges, body cameras, and training**, not by banning legitimate protective gear.
2. Maryland already has laws regarding **criminal impersonation, harassment, and intimidation** that address improper concealment of identity in the commission of a crime.

The legislature should be cautious about crafting new criminal or regulatory provisions around *how someone's gear looks* when the same goals can be pursued through less intrusive means.

5. The Bill Could Be Misapplied and Infringe on Rights

By specifying what *cannot* be worn — while leaving broad room for interpretation — this bill invites:

- **Arbitrary enforcement** depending on local attitudes and individual officers' judgments.
- **Chilling effects** on lawful behavior, including officers' own safety judgments.
- **Underinclusive protection** for similarly situated individuals whose coverings aren't enumerated but perform the same function.

Courts have long held that laws which regulate appearance or expressive conduct must be clear, narrowly tailored, and justified by compelling state interests. This bill does not meet those standards.

Conclusion

For these reasons — its vague and overbroad definitions, its potential for arbitrary enforcement, and its questionable necessity — I urge the committee to **vote against SB0001 / HB155**. If the legislature wishes to address legitimate concerns about anonymity or accountability in policing, it should pursue narrowly tailored reforms that respect constitutional rights and operational realities.

Thank you for consideration,
 Mark Meyerovich
 Gaithersburg, MD
 District 15

HB0155 Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers -

Uploaded by: Mary Nelson

Position: UNF

Witness: Mary Nelson mgn136@gmail.com 443-485-0255
Jurisdiction: Cecil County

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

UNFAVORABLE

Even proposing this law is one of the greatest disservices one can give to our law enforcement! The very idea that a criminal can rob, steal, shoot and kill while wearing a mask and your law enforcement can't protect their faces and their identities, if need be, from enemies trying to protect criminals, is beyond comprehension.

Further, the State of Maryland does not need any more commissions taking up tax payer money and resources to come up with more policies, restrictions and laws that do not benefit law abiding citizens of this country and are impossible to manage.

What we need is legislators who are in tune with the people who want a safe environment, food for their families and schools that teach their children to read and write. Our children should not be learning how to hamper justice, get by without learning and play the system. That is what we are teaching if we as adults seek to legislate to control and prevent justice.

I request that you return an UNFAVORABLE VOTE.

MCPA-MSA - HB 155 Public Safety - Law Enforcement

Uploaded by: Samira Jackson

Position: UNF



Maryland Chiefs of Police Association

Maryland Sheriffs' Association



MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Sandy Bartlett, Chair and
Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Darren Popkin, Executive Director, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Andrea Mansfield, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Samira Jackson, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: February 24, 2026

RE: **HB 155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers Prohibition on Face Coverings**

POSITION: **OPPOSE**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **OPPOSE** HB 155, which requires the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission (MPTSC) to develop and adopt a model policy prohibiting the use of face coverings by any law enforcement officer while performing duties in Maryland. Each law enforcement agency operating in the State is required to adopt a policy consistent with the model policy.

While we appreciate the intent of HB 155, the legislation would restrict officers' ability to use face coverings in circumstances where they are critical for safety, operational integrity, and public health. Many law enforcement roles depend on protecting officer identity during gang, narcotics, or sensitive intelligence investigations. Removing this ability increases the risk that officers or their families become identifiable targets for retaliation or intimidation in the community. Criminal organizations and repeat violent offenders routinely collect information on officers involved in their cases. Restricting identity protection undermines officer safety and impairs the investigative work the public expects.

HB 155 also does not adequately account for the operational and environmental contexts in which face coverings are necessary. Tactical teams, fugitive task forces, and undercover or plainclothes personnel rely on facial protection to preserve the integrity of arrests, surveillance, and sensitive operations. Face coverings are also integrated into protective gear such as helmets, goggles, and respirators used during responses involving chemicals, smoke, airborne debris, or hazardous materials. During disease outbreaks and in close-contact settings with medically vulnerable individuals, face coverings protect both officers and the public. Harsh weather conditions, such as extreme cold or wind, also require facial protection to safely perform outdoor duties. We agree that public trust is essential to policing and we are committed to policies that strengthen transparency and accountability.

We are particularly concerned with the punishment structure in HB 155. A violation would constitute a misdemeanor punishable by up to two years of imprisonment or a \$2,000 fine, require an officer to waive all immunity in any related civil action, and be classified as police misconduct under Maryland law. These penalties are disproportionate and risk creating a chilling effect on reasonable, good-faith decision-making in fast-moving and dangerous situations.

Should the Committee wish to move forward with legislation restricting the use of face coverings, MCPA and MSA strongly suggest the MPTSC establish the policy, the circumstances in which face coverings can and cannot be used, and its applicability. That would avoid the prescriptive nature of the bill and provide an opportunity to develop a workable policy. MCPA and MSA also encourage deleting the penalty provisions in the bill. Officers are already disciplined for violating policies.

For these reasons, MCPA and MSA **OPPOSE HB 155** and urges an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report.

SB0001_HB0155_ Public Safety - Law Enforcement Of

Uploaded by: Trudy Tibbals

Position: UNF

SB0001/HB0155: Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings: Please VOTE AGAINST this bill.

Dear Judicial Proceedings Committee and Judiciary Committee:

I respectfully request that you vote to **oppose** **SB0001/HB0155 – Public Safety: Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings**.

While transparency and accountability in law enforcement are critically important, this bill would have the unintended consequence of **compromising officer safety and undermining effective policing**. In many circumstances, face coverings are essential tools that protect officers from physical harm, retaliation, and long-term health risks.

Law enforcement officers often wear face coverings during crowd-control situations, protests, tactical operations, undercover assignments, or when responding to credible threats. Requiring officers to expose their identities in volatile or hostile environments increases the risk of **targeted retaliation against officers and their families**, both during and after an incident. This risk is not hypothetical and has been documented nationwide. Officers **must** be able to protect their identities to preserve operational integrity and prevent criminal actors from identifying, intimidating, or retaliating against them.

From a **public safety standpoint**, courts have consistently recognized that the government has a compelling interest in protecting the safety of law enforcement personnel. Policies that unnecessarily heighten risk may **expose the state to liability** if officers are harmed as a foreseeable result of mandated exposure.

Additionally, face coverings may be necessary for **health and safety reasons**, including protection from airborne hazards, chemical agents, smoke, infectious diseases, or environmental debris. A blanket prohibition fails to account for these realities and limits officers' ability to adapt to dangerous or unpredictable conditions.

Accountability should be achieved through **constitutionally sound**, proven measures such as body-worn cameras, clear identification numbers, internal oversight, and civilian review mechanisms—not by exposing officers to unnecessary danger. These tools promote transparency without exposing officers to heightened danger or restricting operational discretion in the field.

SB0001/HB0155 prioritizes a one-size-fits-all mandate over nuanced, lawful public safety practices and risks unintended legal and safety consequences. It also risks discouraging qualified individuals from entering or remaining in law enforcement at a time when recruitment and retention are already significant challenges.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to **vote against SB0001/HB0155**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Trudy Tibbals

HB155_INFO.pdf

Uploaded by: Donna Edwards

Position: INFO



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

Affiliated with the National AFL-CIO

Donna S. Edwards
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HB 155 – Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings

House Judiciary Committee

February 24, 2026

INFORMATIONAL

Donna S. Edwards

Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Madame Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide informational testimony on HB 155 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings. This legislation would establish a statewide prohibition on certain face coverings for all law enforcement officers operating in the state while on duty. This issue is complex and raises various questions regarding transparency, accountability, civil liberties, and officer safety. In this testimony, I aim to outline these complexities for the committee's consideration.

As evidenced by our state law, identification is a cornerstone of accountable policing. When officers hide their faces during routine interactions, the public loses their ability to know who is exercising their authority, report misconduct, or build trust in their law enforcement institutions. However, this is not just about identity, but about anonymity. Concealed identities can undermine public trust, but there are circumstances where police anonymity is necessary to protect officers from targeted threats. This bill must strike a balance between these challenges without eroding transparency or legitimate safety measures.

In a broader context, this topic also intersects with concerns about surveillance by law enforcement agencies. Federal Agencies, such as the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), have a known history of monitoring protestors, raising First Amendment implications. Any policy regulating face coverings must not infringe on the rights of private citizens, including protestors who choose to cover their faces to protect them against government surveillance and retaliation. While HB 155 only applies to law enforcement officers, making the distinction is important for how individuals will interpret the law.

The bill also attempts to address officer safety directly by outlining a number of exceptions when law enforcement officers are authorized to wear face coverings. These include medical masks, tactical gear, religious garments, and other equipment permitted by



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workplace safety laws. These exceptions acknowledge that officer safety is a priority and not just a concern, and that they face hazardous situations every day where protective gear is essential. The challenge lies in determining where legitimate safety needs end and where unnecessary concealment begins.

To resolve this, the legislation requires the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to develop model policy that affirms its commitment to transparency while also keeping officer safety at the forefront. This approach recognizes that officer safety is real by ensuring that policy is clearly defined, consistently applied, and limited to circumstances where it is genuinely needed.

The question of jurisdiction also creates another layer to this issue. While HB 155 broadly defines “law enforcement agency” to include federal agencies operating in Maryland, the Supremacy Clause of the U.S. Constitution limits the state’s authority over federal personnel. Maryland may set expectations for how federal officers operate in the state, but it cannot impose criminal liability on federal officers whose actions are governed by federal law or operational policy. Although the bill signals Maryland’s commitment to transparency, its enforceability over ICE agents and other federal law enforcement personnel is limited.

Finally, the bill’s definition of “face covering” is clear and explicitly excludes religious garments. However, it is important to note that arguments used to oppose religious face coverings in public spaces (i.e. security and identification) are often the same arguments raised in favor of allowing police officers to conceal their faces. While the bill draws a line between the two, there must be clear communication with the public about the bill’s intent and that the distinction between private religious expression and state authority is maintained.



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