

Brian Hakans
Bill 5-26- The Unmask ICE Act
Montgomery County Council
March 2, 2026
Silver Spring, MD 20902

Dear County Council,

My name is Brian Hakans. I am a resident of the Forest Glen area of Silver Spring, a father of two young children, a public-school teacher, and a community organizer with MoCo IRC (Montgomery County Immigrant Rights Collective) and the Democratic Socialists of America. I am submitting testimony in support of **Bill 5-26, the Unmask ICE Act**. This bill addresses the use of masks by law-enforcement officers, including ICE agents, during operations in Montgomery County.

The technical mechanisms of this bill will hold all law enforcement officers in the county to the same standards of transparency and accountability. The current practice- particularly by ICE- of conducting operations with masked agents undermines public trust, obscures responsibility, and creates conditions where abuse can occur without consequence. Recent national reporting- including incidents in Minneapolis- involving masked federal agents has shown how dangerous and destabilizing anonymous enforcement can be. This bill will also require Montgomery County police to uphold county law when federal agents violate the mask prohibition. Local law enforcement must be empowered and expected to protect the wellbeing of county residents, even when that means confronting federal agencies. If our police are to “protect and serve” this community, they need clear direction and the backing of county government to do so.

Last February, I personally witnessed masked ICE agents conducting an operation at my sister-in-law’s home. The Ring camera recording shows eight agents approaching the door, most of them masked. The lead agent instructed the unmasked officers to cover their faces and then placed a hand over the camera. This is not the behavior of an accountable, community-centered agency. It is the behavior of an agency that does not want to be identified or held accountable while exercising state power in a residential neighborhood. When law-enforcement officers conceal their identities, it is a hallmark of authoritarian policing: actions taken without transparency, without oversight, and without any meaningful way for the public to seek redress if rights are violated.

Communities across the country are grappling with increasingly opaque and aggressive enforcement practices. Montgomery County has a choice: to lead by insisting on transparency and democratic accountability, or to allow anonymous armed agents to operate in our neighborhoods without oversight. Our children deserve to grow up in a county where those who enforce the law do so openly, visibly and responsibly. When they

ask us what we did during this moment, we should be able to say that we stood up for democratic norms and community safety, even when it required confronting powerful federal agencies.

I urge you to vote yes on **Bill 5-26**. Thank you for considering my testimony.