

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL 5-26,
THE UNMASK ICE ACT
March 3, 2026**

My name is Jennifer Hess and I've 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 Bill 5-26, the Unmask ICE Act.

We are at a truly alarming moment in our country: authoritarianism, neo-royalism, fascism. Whatever the label, the elements are clear: unbridled military aggression, suppression of dissent, scapegoating of vulnerable groups, and celebration of violence.

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. Bill 5-26 properly demands that law enforcement *not* wear masks. I would argue the bill should go further and require that all security forces operating in our county *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. Montgomery County law must make clear that masked, unidentified individuals with guns are operating outside the law. I believe that Bill 5-26 is a step in the right direction toward achieving these goals. Thank you for your consideration.