

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Montgomery County Council

Public Hearing -- March 4, 2026

Submitted By: William Hegwood

Capacity: Private Citizen, Montgomery County Resident

Regarding: Bill 3-26 (County Values Act) and Bill 5-26 (Unmask ICE Act)

Date: March 3, 2026

Testimony in Support of Bill 3-26

Administration -- Immigration Enforcement Guidance -- Required (The County Values Act)

Good afternoon, Councilmembers.

My name is William Hegwood. I am a Montgomery County resident speaking today as a private citizen.

I support Bill 3-26, and I want to speak to two principles that should matter to everyone in this room regardless of politics: democratic accountability and fiscal responsibility.

I. Democratic Accountability

Democracies work differently than authoritarian systems because government power has to operate out in the open, through clear rules and visible processes. When enforcement authority shows up without clear identification, without procedures, without anyone designated to be responsible, communities stop trusting the institutions that are supposed to protect them.

History bears this out. From slave catchers to the masked night riders of Reconstruction, anonymous coercive power has been used to terrorize communities rather than protect them. I am not equating those eras to today. But the pattern is real, and the answer has always been the same: institutional clarity and accountability.

Bill 3-26 provides that. Warrants. Guidance. Training. Designated officials. That is not obstruction. That is how a functioning democracy is supposed to work.

II. Fiscal Responsibility

Let's talk money, because this is also a fiscal issue and taxpayers deserve to hear it plainly.

The County's own Economic Impact Statement concludes this legislation would have a positive economic impact.

Undocumented residents in Montgomery County participate in the labor force at 78 percent -- which is actually higher than the County average. They build our homes and staff our restaurants and hotels.

When you remove a working, law-abiding breadwinner from a household, the costs do not go away. They get transferred onto the rest of us -- housing instability, emergency childcare, increased school service demands, and local assistance programs.

Unlike the federal government, Montgomery County cannot run a deficit. Those costs land on local taxpayers. That is not compassion versus fiscal discipline. That is just math.

Bill 3-26 helps prevent an unnecessary transfer of private economic loss onto the public ledger.

For these reasons, I urge the Council to support Bill 3-26.

Testimony in Support of Bill 5-26

Police -- Mask or Facial Coverings -- Prohibited (The Unmask ICE Act)

I also wish to address Bill 5-26.

This bill comes down to something fundamental. When the government shows up with the power to detain you or take you away, you have a right to know who that is. That is a basic expectation in a free society.

Masked enforcement breaks that expectation. The public can be identified. The officer cannot. That kind of one-sided power is what you see in authoritarian systems. It is not what we are supposed to be.

History has shown us repeatedly that when the state can act anonymously against people, that power gets abused. That is not a hypothetical. It is a documented pattern across many times and places.

Bill 5-26 does not stop anyone from doing their job. It simply says that if you are exercising government authority in Montgomery County, people have a right to know who you are.

Power should show its face. Transparency is not obstruction. It is what separates a democracy from something else.

For these reasons, I urge the Council to support Bill 5-26.

Respectfully submitted,

William Hegwood

Montgomery County Resident

March 3, 2026