

**Testimony on Bill 3-26 and Bill 5-26 – Favorable**  
**Bill 3-26 – County Values Act**  
**Bill 5-26 – Unmask ICE Act**  
**March 2, 2026**

Good afternoon, Council President, Vice President, and Councilmembers. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on **Bill 3-26: County Values Act and Bill 5-26: Unmask ICE Act**, and thank you to those of you who have cosponsored **both bills**.

My name is **Laura Newland**, and I am a **resident** of **District 7** in Maryland. I have spent 18+ years in Montgomery County and D.C. I am writing in support of both Bill 3-26 and Bill 5-26. I went to law school more than 20 years ago because I believe in the ability and responsibility of our legal system to protect those with the least access to power, those who bear the brunt of the prejudices and fears and anxieties of the powerful.

We know that the vast majority (~75%) undocumented immigrants who are being detained by ICE do not have any criminal record at all. Of those who do have a criminal record, most are minor offenses. We know that undocumented immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than US citizens. We also know that ICE does not distinguish between undocumented immigrants and anyone ICE thinks could be an undocumented immigrant (i.e., anyone not white).

When communities (undocumented immigrants, documented immigrants, and Black and brown people) impacted by a ramping up of immigration enforcement are scared, they are less likely to trust law enforcement and report being victims or witnesses of crimes, which makes all of us less safe. Violent, out of control, lawless enforcement practices have a chilling effect on all immigrants and anyone who may be viewed as an outsider because of the color of their skin, the language they speak, or the way they worship.

As we have seen in Minnesota, violent, out of control, lawless enforcement practices also have a chilling impact on school attendance, not just on students who themselves are undocumented, but on children whose families may be targeted by racist DHS policies. As we have seen in Minnesota, ramped up, violent, out of control immigration enforcement also has a chilling effect on businesses. Employees and business owners who may be subject to racist DHS policies and are afraid of being kidnapped, detained or deported, regardless of immigration status, may be fearful of going to work or opening their businesses. Ramped up, violent, and out of control immigration enforcement has a chilling effect on impacted communities (including many people who are not undocumented immigrants) from obtaining medical care. This has an impact on an individual's health, but it can also have a negative impact on community health.

**Bill 3-26** simply mirrors and aligns Montgomery County with The Maryland Values Act. This bill requires reasonable requirements to protect our community, including: 1) requiring a judicial warrant for ICE to gain access to non-public areas, largely prohibiting the use of County resources for immigration

enforcement activities, 2) requiring signage indicating such requirements, and 3) requiring comprehensive immigration enforcement guidance for County departments. The bill explicitly preserves compliance with federal law.

**Bill 5-26** prohibits any law enforcement agency from wearing masks or facial coverings with certain limited exceptions. Again, this bill explicitly states that it is not to be interpreted or applied to create any conflict with federal or state law.

I support both bills because the lawless actions of immigration enforcement make our communities more dangerous for all of us. Our community must refuse to condone the illegal and immoral actions of law enforcement and demand that law enforcement follow very simple, straightforward, and widely-accepted practices to ensure the safety of everyone in our community.

Requiring judicial warrants to enter nonpublic areas and requiring that our community be able to identify law enforcement agents are necessary checks on the rampant abuse of power that we are currently seeing all over the country, including our own county, by law enforcement agents who think they are above the law. The idea that we need bills to mandate the use of judicial warrants to enter non-public areas and to require law enforcement to not wear masks is truly absurd, but we must respond to the moment we find ourselves in.

It is up to all of us, especially local leaders, to stand strong in resistance to this creeping authoritarianism—to be on the right side of history, regardless of political affiliation. This is not a right or left issue. It is a question of whether we want to continue to be a country where we bend the moral arc of the universe towards justice and there is more freedom for more people, or whether we will bend our knees to authoritarianism.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the whole council to vote in favor of both bills. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Laura Newland