

Economic Impact Statement

Montgomery County, Maryland

Bill 5-26, Police – Mask or Facial Coverings – Prohibited (The Unmask ICE Act)

Summary

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) cannot determine whether Bill 5-26 would impact economic conditions in the County, as measured by the Council's priority economic indicators. The Bill proposes to prohibit federal, state, and local law enforcement officers from wearing masks or other face coverings while on duty in the County. If enacted, it is uncertain whether the County could enforce the law due to ongoing legal battles over the constitutionality of state and local mask bans.¹ Moreover, even if the Courts decide in their favor, the Trump administration may simply not comply with mask bans, as administration officials have already signaled.²

However, if the Bill is enforceable and limits federal immigration enforcement activities in the County, it would positively impact economic conditions in the County, as detailed in the [Economic Impact Statement](#) for a recently introduced legislation (Bill 3-26) that would limit ICE activity locally. In this analysis, OLO concluded that any policies that restrict these activities would:

- Reduce the risk of sudden loss of income and averting high out-of-pocket costs for certain undocumented residents, thereby supporting household incomes and preventing families from falling into deeper financial distress;
- Support local businesses—particularly in the construction and accommodation and food services/arts/entertainment industries—by preventing the loss of experienced workers, thereby helping employers avoid the high costs of recruitment and training while maintaining consistent productivity and service quality; and
- Potentially protect the wages of certain U.S.-born workers by mitigating the negative economic spillovers typically associated with large-scale deportations.

Background and Purpose of Bill 5-26

Jurisdictions and states around the country—such as the City of Denver, the State of California, and the State of Virginia—have introduced or passed legislation banning local, state, and federal law enforcement officials from wearing a mask while on duty.³ The Maryland General Assembly also recently introduced legislation that would ban law enforcement officials from wearing masks on duty.⁴

¹ Bridget Lavender, "[Explainer: Can States Prohibit Federal Law Enforcement from Masking on the Job?](#)" State Democracy Research Initiative, University of Wisconsin Law School, January 29, 2025.

² Sarah Fortinsky, "[DHS says ICE won't comply with California ban on agents wearing masks](#)," The Hill, September 22, 2025.

³ WUSA9, "[Maryland lawmakers propose ban on police masks amid immigration crackdown](#)", January 15, 2026.; [California Legislative Information, SB-627 Law enforcement: masks, Effective September 20, 2025.](#); PBS, "[Q&A: Denver Councilmember on the Effort to Unmask ICE Agents](#)", January 26, 2026.; WRIC, "[State lawmaker introduces bill to unmask ICE in Virginia](#)", November 25, 2025.

⁴ [Maryland General Assembly, SB001 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings, Introduced January 14, 2026.](#)

According to its lead sponsor, the purpose of Bill 5-26 is to “strengthen community safety by ensuring residents can clearly identify law enforcement.”⁵ Bill 5-26 would ban federal, state, and local law enforcement officers from wearing masks or other face coverings while on duty in the County. Exceptions to this ban include:

- Medical-grade masks that are surgical or N95 respirators designed to prevent the transmission of airborne diseases;
- Masks designed to protect against exposure to smoke during a fire;
- Masks that are necessary to perform duties during a water rescue operation;
- Masks related to protection against exposure to biological or chemical agents during an incident where such agents may be present;
- Masks designed to protect against exposure to cold during a declared weather emergency; or
- Agents on a SWAT team.⁶

The County Council introduced Bill 5-26, Police – Mask or Facial Coverings – Prohibited (The Unmask ICE Act), on January 20, 2026.⁷

Information Sources, Methodologies, and Assumptions

As required by Section 2-81B of the Montgomery County Code, this Economic Impact Statement evaluates the impacts of Bill 5-26 on residents and private organizations, using the Council’s priority economic indicators as the measure. In doing so, it examines whether the Bill would have a net positive or negative impact on overall economic conditions in the County.⁸

As explained above, if the Council enacts the ban on federal, state, and local law enforcement officers from wearing masks or other face coverings while on duty in the County, it is uncertain whether the County could enforce the law. There are ongoing legal battles over the constitutionality of state and local mask bans,⁹ and, even if the Courts decide in their favor, the Trump administration may simply not comply with mask bans, as administration officials have already signaled.¹⁰ As a result, OLO cannot determine whether the Bill would impact local economic conditions.

Variables

Not applicable

⁵ [Introduction Staff Report for Bill 5-26, Police - Mask or Facial Coverings - Prohibited \(The Unmask ICE Act\), Montgomery County Council, Introduced January 20, 2026.](#)

⁶ [Ibid.](#)

⁷ [Ibid.](#)

⁸ Montgomery County Code, “[Sec. 2-81B, Economic Impact Statements.](#)”

⁹ Bridget Lavender, “[Explainer: Can States Prohibit Federal Law Enforcement from Masking on the Job?](#)” State Democracy Research Initiative, University of Wisconsin Law School, January 29, 2025.

¹⁰ Sarah Fortinsky, “[DHS says ICE won’t comply with California ban on agents wearing masks,](#)” The Hill, September 22, 2025.

Impacts

WORKFORCE ▪ TAXATION POLICY ▪ PROPERTY VALUES ▪ INCOMES ▪ OPERATING COSTS ▪ PRIVATE SECTOR CAPITAL INVESTMENT ▪ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ▪ COMPETITIVENESS

Residents

Not applicable

Businesses, Non-Profits, Other Private Organizations

Not applicable

Net Impact

Not applicable

Discussion Items

Not applicable

Caveats

Two caveats to the economic impact analysis conducted here should be noted. First, predicting the economic impacts of legislation is a challenging analytical endeavor due to data limitations, the multitude of causes of economic outcomes, economic shocks, uncertainty, and other factors. Second, the analysis performed here is intended to *inform* the legislative process, not determine whether the Council should enact legislation. Thus, any conclusion made in this statement does not represent OLO's endorsement of, or objection to, the Bill under consideration.

Contributions

Stephen Roblin, PhD (OLO) prepared this report.