

COUNTY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND
Legislative Session 2026, Legislative Day No. 5

Bill No. 18-26

Mr. Izzy Patoka, Councilman

By the County Council, February 17, 2026

A BILL
ENTITLED

AN ACT concerning

Conduct of Law Enforcement Officers – Masks Prohibited and Identification Required

FOR the purpose of defining certain terms; prohibiting a law enforcement officer from wearing a mask, personal disguise, or face covering while interacting with the public in the performance of their duties, except under certain circumstances; requiring a law enforcement officer to wear appropriate identification while interacting with the public in the performance of their duties, except under certain circumstances; providing for a conflict between state or federal law and the provisions of this Act; providing for the severability of the provisions of this Act; and generally relating to the conduct of law enforcement officers.

BY adding

Article 19 – Police Department
Title 4 – Transparent Policing
Baltimore County Code, 2015

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.
[Brackets] indicate matter stricken from existing law.
~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from bill.
Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

WHEREAS, effective policing is predicated on positive interactions between law enforcement agencies and the public they serve; and

WHEREAS, these positive interactions also depend on the public having trust in the members of law enforcement; and

WHEREAS, an important component of that trust is for the public to be able to readily observe and ascertain the identity of law enforcement officers during the performance of their duties; and

WHEREAS, the Baltimore County Police Department in particular has consistently demonstrated its commitment and leadership in meeting and exceeding the needs of communities, and in engaging in practices that facilitate the best policing outcomes; and

WHEREAS, the County Council believes that transparency, including a prohibition on all law enforcement officers wearing masks to conceal their identity, goes hand-in-hand with effective policing; now therefore

1 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE
2 COUNTY, MARYLAND, that the Laws of Baltimore County read as follows:

3
4 ARTICLE 19 – POLICE DEPARTMENT

5 TITLE 4 – TRANSPARENT POLICING

6
7 § 19-4-101. DEFINITIONS.

8 IN THIS SECTION THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS
9 INDICATED:

(A) "LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER" OR "OFFICER" MEANS A SWORN MEMBER OF A GOVERNMENTAL POLICE FORCE, SHERIFF'S OFFICE, OR SECURITY FORCE OR LAW ENFORCEMENT ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED STATES, THE STATE, A COUNTY, OR A MUNICIPAL CORPORATION THAT BY STATUTE, ORDINANCE, OR COMMON LAW IS AUTHORIZED TO ENFORCE THE GENERAL CRIMINAL LAWS OF OR WITHIN THE UNITED STATES OR THE STATE.

(B) "PERSONAL DISGUISE" MEANS ANY ALTERATION OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S APPEARANCE WITH THE INTENT TO CONCEAL THE INDIVIDUAL'S IDENTITY OR MISLEAD OTHERS.

(C) "FACE COVERING" INCLUDES A NECK GAITER THAT IS WORN IN A WAY THAT CONCEALS AN INDIVIDUAL'S IDENTITY.

(D) "SWAT" MEANS SPECIAL WEAPONS AND TACTICS AND INCLUDES ANY OTHER TACTICAL TEAM THAT HAS SIMILAR DUTIES.

(E) "APPROPRIATE IDENTIFICATION" MEANS ITEMS THAT DISPLAY:

(1) THE POLICE OFFICER'S NAME OR BADGE NUMBER; AND

(2) THE FULL NAME OR INITIALS OF THE OFFICER'S EMPLOYING

AGENCY.

§ 19-4-102. MASKS PROHIBITED.

(A) EXCEPT UNDER SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS SECTION, A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER MAY NOT WEAR A MASK, PERSONAL DISGUISE, OR FACE COVERING WHILE INTERACTING WITH THE PUBLIC IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DUTIES.

1 (B) SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION DOES NOT APPLY TO:

2 (1) A TRANSLUCENT FACE SHIELD OR CLEAR MASK THAT DOES NOT

3 CONCEAL THE WEARER'S FACIAL IDENTITY;

4 (2) A MEDICAL OR SURGICAL GRADE MASK, N95 RESPIRATOR, OR

5 OTHER BREATHING APPARATUS WORN TO PREVENT THE TRANSMISSION OF

6 AIRBORNE DISEASES;

7 (3) A MASK OR BREATHING APPARATUS WORN TO PROTECT

8 AGAINST EXPOSURE TO SMOKE DURING A FIRE INVOLVED SITUATION;

9 (4) A MASK OR HELMET NECESSARY TO PERFORM DUTIES DURING A

10 WATER INVOLVED SITUATION;

11 (5) A MASK WORN TO PROTECT AGAINST EXPOSURE TO

12 BIOLOGICAL OR CHEMICAL AGENTS DURING AN INCIDENT WHERE SUCH

13 AGENTS MAY BE PRESENT;

14 (6) A MASK OR FACE COVERING WORN TO PROTECT AGAINST

15 EXPOSURE DURING A WEATHER EVENT THAT MAY CAUSE INJURY TO THE

16 OFFICER WHILE IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DUTIES;

17 (7) A MASK THAT PROVIDES PHYSICAL PROTECTION TO THE FACE

18 WHILE THE OFFICER IS ENGAGED IN HIGH-RISK SITUATIONS, INCLUDING, A

19 SHOOTOUT, STANDOFF, HOSTAGE-TAKING SITUATION, OR TERRORIST

20 SITUATION;

21 (8) A MOTORCYCLE HELMET WORN WHILE THE OFFICER IS

22 UTILIZING A MOTORCYCLE OR OTHER VEHICLE THAT REQUIRES A HELMET FOR

23 SAFE OPERATIONS WHILE IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DUTIES; OR

(9) EYEWEAR NECESSARY TO PROTECT FROM THE USE OF RETINAL WEAPONS, INCLUDING LASERS.

(C) NOTWITHSTANDING SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION, A SWAT TEAM OFFICER MAY UTILIZE GEAR NECESSARY TO PROTECT THEIR FACES FROM PHYSICAL HARM WHILE IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR SWAT TEAM DUTIES.

§ 19-4-103. IDENTIFICATION REQUIRED.

(A) EXCEPT UNDER SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS SECTION, A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER SHALL WEAR AND DISPLAY APPROPRIATE IDENTIFICATION IN A MANNER THAT IS READILY VISIBLE WHILE INTERACTING WITH THE PUBLIC IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DUTIES.

(B) SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION DOES NOT APPLY TO:

(1) AN OPERATION DURING WHICH AN OFFICER MUST CONCEAL THEIR IDENTITY OR PURPOSE TO INVESTIGATE OR GATHER EVIDENCE OF CRIMINAL ACTIVITY WHILE IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DUTIES;

(2) EXIGENT CIRCUMSTANCES THAT INVOLVE IMMINENT DANGER TO PERSONS OR PROPERTY OR THE ESCAPE OF A PERPETRATOR OR THE DESTRUCTION OF EVIDENCE, INCLUDING IF THE OFFICER IS RESPONDING TO THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES WHILE OFF-DUTY:

(3) AN OFFICER WEARING PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT THAT PREVENTS DISPLAY OF IDENTIFICATION;

(4) A SWAT TEAM OFFICER WHILE IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR SWAT TEAM DUTIES; OR

(5) AN OFFICER ENGAGED IN PROTECTIVE OPERATIONS INVOLVING ELECTED OFFICIALS, JUDICIAL OFFICERS, OR OTHER DESIGNATED DIGNITARIES WHERE THE DISPLAY OF IDENTIFICATION WOULD COMPROMISE THE SAFETY, ANONYMITY, OR TACTICAL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROTECTION DETAIL.

§ 19-4-104. APPLICABILITY.

TO THE EXTENT THAT ANY PROVISION IN THIS TITLE CONFLICTS WITH STATE OR FEDERAL LAW, REGULATION, OR POLICY, THE PROVISIONS OF THIS TITLE SHALL NOT CONTROL, BUT SHALL BE INTERPRETED AS COMPLIMENTARY TO THE INTENT OF OPEN AND TRANSPARENT POLICING.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, that, if any provision of this Act or the application of any provision of this Act to any person or circumstance is held invalid for any reason in a court of competent jurisdiction, the invalidity does not affect other provisions or any other application of this Act that can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and for this purpose the provisions of this Act are declared severable.

SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, that this Act, having been passed by the affirmative vote of five members of the County Council, shall take effect 14 days after its enactment.