

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Victoria Restler. I am a proud Providence resident, parent of two school-aged children and a Professor of Education at Rhode Island College. I am writing to express my strong support for H7211 to bar law enforcement from wearing masks or disguises when interacting with the public, require visible ID, and impose criminal penalties and civil liability for violations.

As a parent, a professor and a Jewish American, it has been chilling to see law enforcement across the country and here in our state cover their faces and commit acts of violence on children, elders, citizens, residents and fellow human beings. While the violent abductions, abuse and murder inspire true terror, the frequent use of masks inhibits transparency and prevents identification or accountability.

When the faces and badges of law enforcement officers are not clearly visible, it becomes nearly impossible to report or identify officers involved in misconduct. The use of face coverings, particularly by heavily armed agents, creates a "police state" atmosphere that destroys trust and opens windows for copycat criminals who are impersonating federal agents to commit robberies and assaults (as reported by PBS). It echoes the habits of secret police that have operated with impunity under fascist regimes all over the world.

I respectfully urge you to stand against these practices, and to ensure transparency and accountability for all Rhode Islanders by passing H7211.

Thank you for reviewing my testimony and my recommendation to support House Bill 7211.

Sincerely,

Dr. Victoria Restler