

An Act ensuring law enforcement identification for public safety

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Monday, January 12, Senator Patricia D. Jehlen filed An Act ensuring law enforcement identification for public safety. The bill bans the use of masks by all law enforcement officers in the state, including federal officers, while performing their duties. The bill was drafted as a response to growing concerns about activities of federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents. It takes a step to protect Massachusetts residents from the use of law enforcement officers as secret, unaccountable police.

Senator Jehlen said, “The killing of Renee Nicole Good in Minneapolis demonstrates again the reckless and escalating threat to public safety of armed, masked ICE officers. Many of our constituents are asking us to take action to limit ICE activities.” The bill known as the No Secret Police Act ensures that officers may not wear a mask or personal disguise while working. Masks and personal disguises are defined as any covering that obscures the face of an officer and renders them unidentifiable, or any clothing that conceals an officer’s status as an officer, including concealing their issued badge.

Any officer that fails to comply would be subject to a \$1000 fine. Massachusetts officers that violate the mask ban would also face the potential revocation of their certification by the POST Commission.

There are exceptions to the ban, such as necessary masking needs due to disability or other health conditions. Other exceptions include tactical operations, undercover assignments and masks designed to protect against exposure to harmful substances like smoke during a state of emergency as declared by the Governor.

This bill does not interrupt the core responsibilities or work of ICE. It aims to ensure that members of the public are able to identify officers working on official duties, for the public’s safety.

—Office of Senator Patricia D. Jehlen