



Delaware-Maryland Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Testimony Prepared for the
Health and Government Operations Committee
on
Senate Bill 806
March 30, 2023
Position: **Favorable**

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak in favor of expanding access to health care in Maryland. I am Lee Hudson, assistant to the bishop for public policy in the Delaware-Maryland Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, a faith community with congregations with three judicatories across all regions of our State.

Our community advocates access to appropriate, adequate, and affordable health care *for all people in the United States and its territories* (“Caring for Health,” ELCA, 2003).

We welcome an opportunity to enlarge the discourse about expanding access to health care in Maryland, as **Senate Bill 806** intends to do. Assumptions about access typically begin after exclusions have been presumptively established.

Senate Bill 806 will convene the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and the Maryland Department of Health for study of the need and the options for gathering more people into Maryland’s existing health insurances.

Status procedures and other circumstantial exigencies should not amount to denial of access to health care. People struggling to afford a decent living will be struggling to afford health care. One result of health un- and under-insurance will be excess health costs from uncompensated care, the hidden tax allocated on the medical care market. It also will increase the aggregate health care cost by compromising health outcomes (an articulated concern of our 2003 “Caring for Health” social statement). Untreated health issues don’t save money and cause needless human suffering.

We supported expanding Medicaid for pre- and post-natal care regardless of immigrant status in the prior General Assembly session. We will support further expansions of access to care when they come before the MGA. We concur that the inclusion of *dental care* is appropriate and necessary for a study about expansion of health care.

Successful expansion of health care access in Maryland needs to find a feasible way to cover at least 115,000 more medically uninsured people, the number identified in a 2021 MHBE report. We know what cohort of Maryland residents that includes, and we know why they’re denied reasonable, adequate health care. Let’s have a credible study, with findings for how to gather them into the available care. Let’s pass **Senate Bill 806**.

Lee Hudson