



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

Testimony Prepared for the
Finance Committee

on

House Bill 183

March 21, 2024

Position: **Favorable w amendments**

Madam Chair and members of the Committees, thank you for this opportunity to testify about nutrition and well-being for the children of our State. I am Lee Hudson, assistant to the bishop of the Delaware-Maryland Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, for public policy. We are a faith community in three judicatories scattered across our State.

Our community's work in policy advocacy began as a commitment to end hunger. That remains one of the principal goals of our work, nationally and internationally. It was advanced in 1999 with, "Economic Life," (ELCA, re: *the moral imperative to seek sufficient, sustainable livelihood for all*). We maintain a permanent institutional appeal to address and advocate an end to hunger in the United States, and anywhere in the world where we are represented by constituent assemblies and service organizations.

Child hunger is a persistent public scandal in the United States. One of the social defects illuminated by Covid19 was a spike in malnourishment among children because of the loss of nutritional resources delivered through the public education system.

The federal extension of SNAP COVID-19 Administrative Flexibilities in 2021 had a beneficial effect on child health and wellness by ensuring more adequate nutrition for thousands of them more consistently.

Maryland has an opportunity to improve SNAP nutritional benefits for its children during the summer months when its schools are not in session and available as platforms for child nutrition. The first reading of **House Bill 183** would have done that by adding in the months of June, July, and August to household benefit allowances (with a lesser amount for December). The bill that has crossed to the Senate from the floor of the House where it was crippled, would not do that.

However, amendments offered Delegate Pam Queen would result in more robust nutritional service for eligible children. This is the goal we want to support. Our *Favorable with amendments* support, then, refers to **Del. Queen's amendments**.

Even in wealthy and progressive Maryland child hunger is still prevalent. Children have no agency over their economic circumstance and the perils of child malnourishment are social, not just individual. We support a favorable report on an amended bill.

Lee Hudson