



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

Testimony Prepared for the
Judicial Proceedings Committee
on
Senate Bill 1017
March 6, 2024
Position: **Favorable**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to support restorative justice for incarcerated individuals in Maryland. I am Lee Hudson, assistant to the bishop for public policy in the Delaware-Maryland Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We are a faith community with three judicatories located in every region of our State.

Our community committed itself to work and advocate publicly for better outcomes for the incarcerated and their communities. We have said, *To dramatically increase chances for success, re-entry support must begin long before release from prison. By identifying needs such as basic life-skill and job-skill training, education and treatment needs at sentencing, and then comprehensively addressing these needs during incarceration, the likelihood of successful transition back into the community is heightened.* (“The Church and Criminal Justice,” ELCA, 2013) We have also conducted a ministry inside Jessup since 1985 known as the Community of St. Dysmas. One of its goals is successful reentry into community, family, and society after its incarcerated members are released. We share the interest of many others in the State in restorative efforts to reduce recidivism and reclaim human life for productive social engagement.

The State established an education and training program in 2021, the ***Inmate Training and Job Pilot Program*** to provide educational and vocational training opportunities for inmates in the 12 months preceding their release. Our understanding is that it was successful.

Furthering that success appears to be in the State’s interest in “corrections” and social wholeness in the result labeled “reentry.” **Senate Bill 1017** calls for Maryland Corrections Enterprises to build on some of this policy experience by developing an employment plan for program participants upon their release from incarceration. Our experience informs us that this is the right idea restorative justice.

Therefore, we urge your favorable report.

Lee Hudson