



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

Testimony prepared for the
Health and Government Affairs Committee
on
Senate Bill 357
March 27, 2025
Position: **Favorable**

Madam Chair and members of the Committee; thank you for this opportunity to support access to adequate and appropriate medical care 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 a demographically diverse Maryland constituency from Red House to Ocean City.

Our community advocates for access to appropriate, adequate, and affordable health care for all people in the United States (*Caring for Health*, ELCA, 2003) as the Committee knows well. We include medical treatment in “appropriate” and “adequate care”, and therefore any calculation of “affordable”. We supported SB202/HB279 of 2023 affirming the authority of PDAB to establish upper payment limits in its indicated circumstances.

Costly drugs can compromise medical treatment for anyone. As we’ve all learned by dreary repetition across the medical landscape, denial of treatment just builds up costs farther along the care continuum. That is a particular concern of our community’s interest in those who are financially disadvantaged. Consigning them to suffering is a cruel way to manage care.

Our community’s experience in places we serve is that the cost of prescriptions is a common and shared challenge. A list of charity solicitations for which folks enter church doors would include food, utilities, rent/housing, and *medicines*. Public assistance programs to which they may be directed only go so far. Medication can be a recurring treatment: filling a gap in one month won’t suspend the need in the next.

The House and this Committee have already passed their version of this bill, for which we rejoice and extend our thanks to HGO. We understand that this hearing is a means for getting all the wording aligned between the chambers, so we are glad to say “Me Too” once more.

Our community’s position is that affordability *is* access to health care. So, we join our many Maryland religious community colleagues and health care professionals in asking your favorable report for **Senate Bill 357**.

Lee Hudson