



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

Testimony Prepared for the
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
on
Senate Joint Resolution 4
March 8, 2023
Position: **Favorable**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Rules and Executive Nominations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify for a human right that inheres with the gifts of creation. 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 synods in every part of our State.

Our community addressed concern for a safe, healthy environment that can sustain life in “Caring for Creation” (ELCA, 1993). Among perspectives articulated in that statement is stewardship of natural resources and processes as a matter of the human ethos. It is therefore a spiritual matter; because all living things are within a web of life called nature. Nature is simply not ours. It is a universal given, not traded goods.

Human activity has consequences, and consequences can result in illness and injury, life or death. We must discern, in order to be wise; we must respect in order to flourish. Because communities of faith worship a Maker, they approach providence with reverence and gratitude. Through created gifts—provided, not earned or owned—the holiness of life, time and human experience are glimpsed. We are not merely all in this together; we are all *of this*, together.

It turns out that a providential legacy for life is in Maryland's public record. An occurrence of this General Assembly adopted a Maryland Environmental Policy Act in its 1973 session. Among its commitments, *each person has a fundamental and inalienable right to a healthful environment*. We could not have said it better ourselves.

So, we support **Senate Joint Resolution 4**. Clearly its spirit and policy effect have been serially violated over its fifty years. But iterating and reiterating what is necessary for people to live safe, healthy lives has value beyond mere feel-good language. Maryland made environmental justice a policy value. That is a representation of proper aims for Maryland law and policy. It was true fifty years ago. It is more urgently so today. We implore your support for MEPA, as if you were supporting the lives of the people of Maryland. We ask your favorable report on **Senate Joint Resolution 4**.

Lee Hudson