



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 2
March 8, 2023
Position: **Favorable**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak for a flourishing 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 expressed concern for a healthy environment to sustain life in “Caring for Creation” (ELCA, 1993). Among its perspectives is stewardship of natural resources and processes. Nature is simply not ours. It is a universal given, not traded goods.

Human activity has consequences; some threaten the abundance of life on earth. We must discern, to be wise; we must respect to flourish. Because communities of faith reverence a Maker, their traditions typically approach providence with gratitude and awe. Through created gifts—provided, not earned or owned—the holiness of life, time and human experience may be glimpsed. We are not merely all in this together; we are all *of this*, together.

Mechanized industrial fishing threatens the naturally occurring scales of habitat, species, and generation that have made the garden of earth plentifully good. Technology-aided trawling collapsed the super-abundant Grand Banks fishery decades ago. The Bay’s oyster stock never recovered after about 1905. Horseshoe crabs have been teetering on the brink for years because they are cheap to harvest and saleable at market. With them an entire cadre of long-migrant shorebirds are threatened. Any notion that we know what we’re doing, or that some benevolent market force will do the right thing for us is a fantasy. We live in a depleted natural world; we depleted it; the material historical record tells us this truth.

And so, also menhaden, a critical resource in the entire East Coast aquatic food chain. Mechanized fishing is reducing its stock below a population sufficient for sustainability, let alone for commercial demand. To avoid crashing another building-block of life on the planet we will have to stop doing what we are doing. To return to the Grand Banks fishery, a jury-rigged regime of quotas and regulation have made it possible to save some commercial fishing there. It never recovered a thriving stock. We are essentially fish-farming the open ocean to save commerce, but not natural wildlife.

Banning industrial equipment meant to take more fish faster is the only way to save multiple tiers of aquatic life along the East Coast, leave aside any idea of “profit.” We support **Senate Joint Resolution 2** to add Maryland’s to voices calling for the Atlantic Marine Fisheries Commission to restrict the menhaden harvest. It’s necessary, urgent, and calls for your favorable report.

Lee Hudson