



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

Testimony prepared for the
Economic Matters Committee
on
House Bill 915
March 6, 2023
Position: **Favorable**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify about stewardship in the natural world. 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 of congregations in three ELCA synods, located in every part of the State.

Our community named greenhouse gas emissions an environmental threat to the natural world in 1993. Despite rhetoric in public discourse, time has validated that assertion. It no longer matters what is thought and said about a climate crisis. Earth's atmosphere is dictating the vocabulary. If what we value is what we spend money for, it's getting expensive to live in our settled communities and their built contexts.

It's gotten very expensive to live in a changing climate. Private enterprises *and* public institutions must calculate the costs of warming, inundation, infrastructure hardening, health and safety, in their forward-facing finances.

The cost of burning stuff has been successfully shifted onto what we are pleased to call "the public," so that the profit of doing so can be appropriated to proprietary entities. The cost of the climate crisis exceeds the cost of carbon-neutrality. It is therefore necessary to allocate some carbon costs at their sources to balance that equation.

House Bill 915 weighs the calculations with a fee measured by emissions out of the largest for-profit operations (not with projections). It then aggregates resource in a fund to be used to help pay for damage and risk still being apportioned to the public year-on-year. Earth's atmosphere tells us someone is going to pay for this crisis one way or another. We may as well begin resourcing public relief now as later when more expensive damage is done.

We continue to urge reductions of current GHG emissions. Seawalls, dredge-fill islands, flood insurance, and latent health conditions within demographic cohorts, are not going to make much difference if we keep burning stuff. We ought to incentivize GHG reductions. We ought, at least, to capture some resource to pay for what is happening now. Our community urges your favorable report.

Lee Hudson