



Delaware-Maryland Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Testimony Prepared for the
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
and the
Budget and Taxation Committee
on
House Bill 503
March 30, 2023
Position: **Favorable**

Mr. Chairmen and members of these Committees, thank you for the opportunity to testify for care of 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 in three judicatories across our State.

Our community began advocating for a safe, healthy, flourishing environment that can sustain life in “Caring for Creation” (*ELCA, 1993. A healthy environment is also a stated concern of our “Caring for Health,” 2003.*) Stewardship of natural gifts and processes, through conservation and preservation policies, is wise and just because it protects what is for the benefit of all things now living.

And “all things now living” illustrates the need to defend and conserve the web of life. Green spaces are habitat; they sequester carbon; they purify air and water of noise and other pollutants; they buffer the watershed. A built environment is no surrogate.

We support practicing preservation and conservation in the natural world for the sake of all things now living. “All creatures great and small” (to quote a popular hymn) require the Seventh Day blessing recorded in Genesis 2:3. Preserving natural blessings within a built environment is a proper public policy.

There are biological research projects being conducted within urban contexts. (*The National Zoo is currently sponsoring bird field research in Baltimore City; see nationalzoo.si.edu/migratory-birds/neighborhood-nestwatch and www.birdsofurbanbaltimore.org/bird-banding.*) Migratory birds, to cite an example, require greenspaces to successfully complete their seasonal, and obligatory journeys. Raptors such as cooper’s hawks, redtails, merlins, kestrels, and owls, and Baltimore’s famous peregrines, are re-hegemonizing habitat within dense development. And, of course, humans—who have nature in the designation “human nature”—require the space, the green, the nature and the benefits that derive from eco-context. The point of our witness being that human life is biologic with all other life.

So, good public policy in Maryland will conserve and preserve a flourishing nature wherever it occurs. **House Bill 503** requires existing funds be directed to a Greenspace Equity Program in contexts where nature has been overlooked, and its benefits compromised.

Our community already advocates environmental protection and remediation for those living within this bill’s definition of “Overburdened Communities.” We enthusiastically do so again by supporting **House Bill 503** and urging your favorable report.

Lee Hudson