



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

Testimony Prepared for the
Judiciary Committee
on
Senate Bill 134
April 1, 2024
Position: **Favorable**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify about the safety of individuals in the custody of the State of 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 located within every jurisdiction of our State.

Our assessment of the human, civil, and community effects of incarceration-as-criminal-punishment are shaped both from the experience of imprisonment in the long faith tradition (see, e.g., Is. 61:1c and Lk. 4:18b, II Cor. 11:23b and Matt. 25:36b) *and* our ministry projects inside prison walls. One of those projects is here in Maryland, the Community of St. Dysmas, an authorized worshipping congregation served by an ordained ELCA pastor. That community has been present on the inside of Maryland's correctional system at Jessup since 1985.

A cursory reading of news reporting, claims, and correctional breakdowns shows that the current administration of Maryland Corrections is balkanized into what amounts to fiefdoms. The State's custody responsibility needs consistent, reliably administered standards and oversight.

We support **Senate Bill 134**, because it proposes a way toward a more uniform set of essential standards and authority seated in the Office of the Attorney General. It strikes us that this is not unlike the AG review authority over policing conduct. The variety and persistence of State Corrections issues suggests that the Department, the State, and the incarcerated should benefit. We, thus, seek your favorable report.

Lee Hudson