



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

Testimony Prepared for the
Judicial Proceedings Committee
on
House Bill 37
March 26, 2024
Position: **Favorable**

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee; thank you for this opportunity to testify about restorative justice for adjudicated individuals in Maryland. I am Lee Hudson, assistant to the bishop for public policy in the Delaware-Maryland Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Our community has committed itself publicly to work and advocate for better outcomes for the incarcerated and their communities. We have said, *To dramatically increase chances for success, re-entry support must begin long before release from prison. By identifying needs such as basic life-skill and job-skill training, education and treatment needs at sentencing, and then comprehensively addressing these needs during incarceration, the likelihood of successful transition back into the community is heightened.* (“The Church and Criminal Justice,” ELCA, 2013, pg. 45.)

The next sentence in this policy statement reads, *The religious dimension of life is significant and deserves to be a major component of rehabilitative programs for those interested:* This we have done in Maryland at Jessup since 1985 through the Community of St. Dysmas. One of the goals for our ministry is successful reentry into community, family and society for the incarcerated when they are released.

We share the State’s interest in restorative work to reduce recidivism and reclaim human life for productive, thriving social engagement. A somewhat similar pilot program under Chapter 677 of 2021 was deemed successful. **House Bill 37** will expand that to incarcerated women in Maryland’s Correction’s system. Because the State, its communities and the incarcerated may all benefit, we ask your favorable report.

Lee Hudson