



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 Bill 653
February 27, 2024
Position: **Favorable**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to urge a policy that may support caring for natural goodness. 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 judicatories in every State region.

Our community's environmental statement and positions ("Caring for Creation", ELCA 1993) was adopted when a principal public concern was corruption of natural commons from pollution and depletion. For example, *Decisions affecting an immediate locale often affect the entire planet*. Pollution of waters is cited. ("Caring for Creation", pg. 4)

Because the concern is human, from within a natural order that supports the life we share with "all things now living", justice, in solidarity with others and the goodness of creation itself, is a commitment for our advocacy and action. Here's what we said then: *It is in hope...that we hear the call to justice; it is in hope that we take action. When we act interdependently and in solidarity with creation, we do justice. We serve and keep the earth, trusting its bounty can be sufficient for all, and sustainable.* (pg. 6)

"The commons", a domain that the Anthropocene exploits and reconfigures, does not belong to human hegemony, no matter how insistently asserted and engineered. Our tradition shapes its public understanding of "commons" with the counsel of spiritual texts: *The earth is the Lord's, and all that is within it, the world, and all dwelling in it.* (Psalm 24:1-2)

Justice, we hold, requires sufficiency and sustainability. A principal concern for justice then, will be commitment to solidarity with "all things now living". A corruptor of the commons, as much as toxins and depletion, is privileged interest—typically diminished to formulae of commercial finance—hostile to sufficiency and sustainability.

The current state of policy affairs often excludes those forced against their own good and will, to assume costs, financial and physical, of others' interests. That policy—socialize risk, privatize benefit—adheres to no reasonable definition of justice.

Senate Bill 653 would grant standing for civil action and remedy to those affected by corruption of natural waters in the State; those living near, working on, dependent on them. It anchors that standing within Maryland's existing Environment and Natural Resources Articles. Overdue, we estimate, for the good, the betterment of all. We implore your favorable report.

Lee Hudson