



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

Testimony Prepared for the
Appropriations Committee
on
House Bill 1254
March 5, 2025
Position: **Favorable**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify about nutrition and its role in the well-being of the children of our State. 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 membership in every region of the State.

Our community's work in policy advocacy began as a commitment to address hunger. It remains one of the principal goals of our advocacy work, nationally and internationally. It was advanced further in 1999 by "Economic Life," (ELCA, re: *the moral imperative to seek sufficient, sustainable livelihood for all*). We maintain a permanent institutional appeal to act and advocate for an end to hunger.

Child hunger is a permanent public scandal in the United States. One of the social defects revealed in the pandemic was a spike in malnourishment among children because of the loss of nutritional resources delivered by the public education system.

According to a *Save the Children* report, twelve million American children are hungry. Kentucky, **Maryland**, Oklahoma, and Washington, D.C. report a 22% rate of family hunger: in **Maryland**, Hispanic and Black families are almost 4 times as likely to face hunger as white families. Kennedy-Krieger reports that 12% of Maryland's children live in poverty, a reliable marker for malnutrition. For all the good work Maryland has done to address poverty via health care expansions, workfare, EITC, *etc.* these statistics shout that something is being left out.

It's Maryland's children. We must not leave them out. There are social, public health, education, and economic consequences to child hunger. Leave those aside in your consideration of **House Bill 1254**. It is cruelty to assess child malnutrition with profit-loss ratios. *Hungry children have no agency over their condition.*

Maryland children, and almost certainly the hungry ones, are mandated by law to be public school children. Give them two acceptable meals a day. We understand that establishing a Community Eligibility Provision Expansion Program would provide better nutrition to more Maryland children needing it. Please diminish appalling child hunger statistics, at least some, at least in Maryland, and report **House Bill 1254** favorably.

Thank you for this important hearing.

Lee Hudson