



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 0668**

**Victims of Communism Memorial Day**

**House Health and Government Operations Committee**

**\*\*FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS\*\***

**TO:** Delegate Joseline Peña-Melynk, Chair; Delegate Bonnie Cullison, Vice Chair; and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

**FROM:** Rev. Kenneth Phelps, Jr.

**DATE:** March 13, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this written testimony on HB 0668 and to offer an amendment and rationale for that request.

**The Amendment:**

SECTION 5: AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED that the Governor annually shall proclaim July 6 as Victims of Capitalism Memorial Day.

A basic premise: Capitalism, like Communism, in its purest form, is not a form of government or a political policy per se. Both are economic theories. And both can – and have, historically – been abused by their subscribers, an abuse which continues to impact the lives of millions of people around the globe. As Lord Action wrote years ago: “Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority: still more when you superadd the tendency or the certainty of corruption by authority. There is no worse heresy than that the office sanctifies the holder of it.” No system is perfect, but there are always those who will work it to their advantage at the expense of all others. Exploitation has run amok in our human history. And both economic systems have yielded to those temptations.

The Episcopal Church has had a lot to say about economic justice.

Resolution 2012-A012 begins by reminding us that “all things in heaven and on earth belong to God alone, and that all worldly treasure is held in trust by human hands to the greater glory of God; and that all economic policy has moral dimensions and



consequences for all human beings; and that global economies should be facilitated in consideration of the interconnectedness of all God's Creation.”

The Church also teaches that all economic life within communities, nations, and the global family should contribute to the well-being of all persons, serve the poor, and promote the dignity and rights of all human beings; and continually urges governments to evaluate and adopt policies that safeguard every human being's right to the basic necessities of life, as well as a right to work, to receive just and living wages and benefits, to experience decent and just working conditions, and to organize and join labor associations; and seeks improvements regarding food security, health care, maternal and child health, humane working conditions, human rights, and prevention of environmental degradations.

Throughout its recent history the Church has consistently supported efforts to provide a living wage, free education, universal health care, guaranteed housing and the right to a clean and healthy environment. And all of these efforts have been in response to an economic philosophy which has commodified every human right and need. Profits always come before people. And now millions of Americans have to choose between putting food on the table, paying their rent or getting health care.

The abuses of capitalism have a long history, much longer than that of communism and its derivatives.

The prophets railed against the abuses by those who cheated their customers by rigging the scales or by charging interest or refusing to forgive debts in the year of Jubilee. Jesus' first act upon arriving in Jerusalem was to clear the Temple of the capitalists who were charging exorbitant exchange rates, overcharging for various essentials and applying interest to loans.

Our own history is marked by the suffering wrought of capitalism, from the enslavement of millions of Africans to the annihilation of indigenous peoples; the inhumane working conditions of the Industrial Age, and the violence against those who stood for the rights of laborers - on display in Lawrence, Massachusetts; Homestead, Pennsylvania, on the Anaconda Road, at the Lattimer Massacre and at Columbine Mine Massacre. The list is extensive.



# THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MARYLAND

The Maryland Episcopal  
Public Policy  
Network

No system is perfect, but the abuses of each need to be remembered as do the millions of victims of each, so that perhaps one day we will be able to resist the urge to accumulate wealth and power and create a society that honors and cares for every member of that society.

Coming to terms with our past is always a good place to start.

I request a favorable report with amendment.