



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

Testimony Prepared for the
Health and Government Operations Committee
on
House Bill 340
February 11, 2025
Position: **Favorable**

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify about caring for creation and the commons called “air”. 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 in three judicatories across our State.

House Bill 340 adds to current authority assigned the Maryland Office of the Attorney General, the set of atmospheric conditions that constitute climate. Climate is the dynamics governing gases that make earth habitable, a mixture of nitrogen and oxygen. It is alterable by changing the mixtures. Human activity has succeeded in altering the atmosphere by loading it with carbon dioxide and methane. There is a tipping point at which returning the atmosphere to its felicitous state that produced the Anthropocene, human life that evolved into civilization, cannot be achieved. Venus is an example of an atmosphere loaded with carbon dioxide. It will never have an earth atmosphere; or an Anthropocene.

Spiritual people will regard the conditions that gave rise to an Anthropocene as a “creation”. They all regard it as a gift and receive it with grateful praise. They will gather before the Giver. They will honor the gift with behaviors that steward its elements, earth and sea and sky. That’s why my faith community, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, began to advocate decarbonization in 1993.

The Maryland Attorney General has current authorization to protect and defend features of what are called Maryland’s Commons, its waters, soils, air. A chief legal strategy is to disincentivize by penalty the desecration of natural gifts from a familiar practice of down-streaming costs of commercial activity by allocating them to the public. We read **House Bill 340**, therefore, to have ample policy precedent for defense of the commons.

Air is the most common imaginable natural feature. It cannot be claimed using geography. It cannot belong to anyone or anyone’s choices. Air is the commons of earth’s atmosphere. Atmosphere has a physics. Its dynamics make the planet habitable. Applying a suitable risk deterrent to despoiling it for everybody, by our calculation, is at least thirty years overdue.

We exhort a favorable report for the sake of all Maryland’s people.

Lee Hudson