



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

Testimony Prepared for the
Judiciary Committee
on
House Bill 1431
February 27, 2025
Position: **Favorable**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify about justice and human rights. I am Lee Hudson, assistant to the bishop for public policy in the Delaware-Maryland Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, a faith community with three synods in every part of the State.

Our faith tradition has taken up the cause of human movement with an understanding of human worth and nascent rights. Displaced persons in the United States do have rights under U.S. law and we have previously testified that they should be advised of and understand the rights they have, and that those should not be presumptively nor surreptitiously abridged. We support **House Bill 1431** as we have supported other proposals for credibly protecting those rights.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has articulated as universal this example of sacred human dignity: *Humans are (created as) civic (i.e., communal) beings and have the right to equal access and participation in legal, civic and political decisions affecting them* (“Human Rights,” ELCA social message, 2017, pg. 6).

This is not less true for refugees, exiles, or displaced persons than citizens. In a social message on “Immigration” (ELCA, 1998, updated 2018) our understanding of and commitment to human rights for those without documents includes *reasonable access* (pg. 8) to lawful residence and citizenship. People without documents require legal apparatus to acquire legal status. They ought not be surveilled without cause. We note also that there are always children among those without documents, and that children cannot possibly navigate a legal process absent assistance and advocates.

House Bill 1431 provides a standard of privacy protection that ought to apply to everyone. Information gathered about us for commercial profit or unauthorized surveillance, and we encourage your favorable report.

Lee Hudson