



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

Testimony Prepared for the
Judiciary Committee
on
Senate Bill 977
March 26, 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.

Ours is a global communion that has addressed human movement since 1939 when the globe was awash in refugees from ruined societies. Human displacement is not criminal activity. Often it is flight, forced exile, or the result of natural or social disaster.

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 **Senate Bill 977** 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 for authorized 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 without advocates.

Senate Bill 977 provides a standard of privacy protection that we hope ought to apply to everyone. Information gathered about us for commercial profit or unauthorized surveillance is a corrupting practice in the social community, and we therefore ask your favorable report.

Lee Hudson