



Delaware-Maryland Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Testimony Prepared for the
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
on
Senate Bill 781
February 27, 2026
Position: Favorable

Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am Reverend Melody Hession-Sigmon, assistant to the bishop for public policy in the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, a faith community with congregations in every part of the state.

In 1993, the ELCA made the concerns addressed by **SB781** a matter of public policy for our denomination.

“The land and its inhabitants are often disenfranchised by the rich and powerful. The degradation of the environment occurs where people have little or no voice in decisions — because of racial, gender, or economic discrimination. This degradation aggravates their situation and swells the numbers of those trapped in urban or rural poverty. We pray, therefore, for the humility and wisdom to stand with and for creation, and the fortitude to support advocates whose efforts are made at personal risk.”

Pollution generating facilities have historically been built next to minority and economically distressed communities in Maryland. That trend continues even today as we see sites for new data center projects. The degradation of God’s good earth is occurring in Maryland where people have little or no voice in decisions, and Low-Wealth, Black, and other communities of color are being targeted.

We celebrate that this bill provides an opportunity for residents to have a voice when facilities near them must apply for environmental permits in order to build new projects or continue their presence in close proximity to neighborhoods. We urge Maryland to join New Jersey, New York, and Minnesota in passing legislation like **SB781**. We ask for a favorable report.

Reverend Melody Hession-Sigmon