



Delaware-Maryland Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Testimony Prepared for the
Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
on
Senate Bill 0036
February 13, 2026
Position: Favorable

Mr. Chairman 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.

Congregations in our synod have increasingly invested more in developing community housing in recent years as the lack of affordable options has become one of the leading drivers of homelessness. The ELCA published in its social policy “Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All” in 1999 that “While a market economy assumes people will act to maximize their own interests, we acknowledge that what is in our interest must be placed in the context of what is good for the neighbor.” The market will not create affordable housing for Marylanders on its own, especially the way it is currently set up in Maryland. **SB36** makes options available to Marylanders for creating more affordable housing.

The ELCA also asserts that, “We tend to view economic life by how it affects us personally. The cross of Christ challenges Christians to view this arena through the experience of those of us who are impoverished, suffering, broken, betrayed, left out, without hope.” (1999) Marylanders are being left behind by our state because they cannot afford to live in the place that they call home. Elderly need to move away from their families and grandkids. Young people are disconnecting from their families and support systems because they can’t afford to live where they grew up. Too many families and individuals are losing their life savings to rent because they are not able to own a home in Maryland. This is not sustainable.

When we pray “Give us today, our daily bread,” we believe that “daily bread” is made possible through a variety of relationships and institutions. For this reason, we urge a favorable report.

Reverend Melody Hession-Sigmon