



Delaware-Maryland Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Testimony Prepared for the
Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
on

House Bill 1382

February 9, 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.

[*Sumud*](#) is the ELCA's response to occupation and injustice in Palestine and Israel. Freed by the transformative life of Christ, the ELCA is committed to accompaniment, advocacy and awareness-raising with partners in the Holy Land and in the U.S.

Sumud, Arabic for “steadfastness,” is used by Palestinian theologians to describe nonviolent resistance to occupation through advocacy, education, social work and faith-rooted presence. Our partners in this work include the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), the only Lutheran church in the Middle East, whose ministries in education, health care, justice and leadership are vital to Palestinian society. We practice accompaniment with this Arabic-speaking community of faithful Lutherans, whom we rely on as our primary lens for understanding the realities in Palestine and Israel.

In Maryland, we have Lutheran clergy who have visited our partners in the ELCJHL and have returned to their congregations transformed by what they have witnessed. As a result, a South West Asia North Africa (SWANA) Peace Team has formed in our synod. In partnership with the neighboring Metro-DC Synod's Peace Team, these congregations have been inspired to increase their non-violent resistance to Israel's illegal occupation and apartheid regime through the historic use of boycotts.

The executive order that **HB1382** seeks to overturn directly affects our congregations' ability to act out their faith principles because it says that contractors with the State are prohibited from participating in boycotts against the nation of Israel. Our congregations have ministries all over the



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State of Maryland, like food pantries, baby pantries, recovery houses, etc., that are essential components in their communities' ecosystems of care. Some of these congregations are contracted with the State of Maryland for funding in order to provide these services to their communities.

The executive order that **HB1382** seeks to overturn is making our congregations afraid of losing their funding if they boycott companies like [Chevron](#) and [HP](#) that fuel the war crimes of a foreign nation. It is making them afraid to protest the apartheid and genocide of their Lutheran siblings in the Holy Land. This executive order undermines the democratic principles of open debate and undermines our congregations' agency in acting on their faith principles.

We join in interfaith witness with CAIR, Jewish Voice for Peace, and others who believe that robust debate and advocacy are cornerstones for a healthy democracy. Ensuring the right to boycott helps protect these values. We urge this committee to prioritize the interests of Marylanders above those of a foreign government that is under investigation by the International Court of Justice for charges of genocide.

We request a favorable report on **HB1382**.

Rev. Melody Hession-Sigmon