

Written Testimony for MD Senate Bill 172

My name is Robert C. Novak and I am in favor of SB172 passing.

My support for this bill is primarily due to the overall fairness of the bill. Any and all United Methodist Churches in Maryland that want to disaffiliate from the United Methodist denomination should be allowed to do so without the undue financial hardship currently being imposed by the United Methodist Baltimore/Washington Conference (UM BWC).

I have been a member of the Thurmont United Methodist church for over 50 years. In the late 1970's, our congregation voted to build a newer and larger church building. We financed the new church building by having members of the congregation agree to support a portion of the church's mortgage payment by contributing well above their normal tithe/offering. We did not receive any financial support from the UM BWC for the construction and/or ongoing maintenance of our church.

Yet the UM BWC is requiring our church to pay the conference approximately 50% of the current market value of the church property in order to disaffiliate. As you can imagine, with real estate values as they are, we cannot begin to afford that. So we are in effect being held hostage by the UM Baltimore/Washington Conference.

As to reimbursement to the UM BWC for the pastoral and other support that we have received over the past years, the conference has been very well compensated through the apportionments that they have required us to pay them. So it is very unfair of the UM BWC to demand a huge amount of money for the churches pay them for property that they independently funded and paid for.

Passage of SB172 would very fairly allow the MD based UM churches to disaffiliate by reimbursing the UM BWC for the acquisition, maintenance, or improvements that the conference funded. That reimbursement would, and in all fairness should be, the only cost owed to the conference in order to for the church to disaffiliate. It would allow the churches to keep their church and property that their congregants paid for. That seems incredibly fair to all involved parties.

Please do pass SB172. I, and many other MD based Methodists, greatly appreciate your time and attention to this matter.

Thanks so much, Robert Novak

(Cell) 240-285-1370