



Delaware-Maryland Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Testimony Prepared for the
Rules and Executive Nominations Committee
on

House Joint Resolution 0009

February 5, 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.

Last year, our ELCA congregations in Maryland and Delaware voted to empower our national bishop's office to advocate to the President of the United States and our elected officials of the House and the Senate that, "The close relationship between the United States government and the government of Israel should be used to end the genocide in Gaza."

We are so grateful for the opportunity to testify in favor of **HJ9** and perhaps empower your committee to likewise advocate for peace and justice in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gaza, and Sudan.

Last year, our national bishop asked for the following from the federal government:

- 1) Suspend all financial and military assistance from the United States to the Israeli state until it meets two critical conditions: agreeing to a permanent ceasefire and allowing, without restriction or hindrance, humanitarian aid to Gaza through credible, longstanding aid mechanisms such as the United Nations and its affiliated international nongovernmental organizations.
- 2) Initiate an investigation into whether U.S. military aid to Israel has been and is being used in compliance with U.S. and international human rights law.
- 3) Announce publicly that under no circumstances will the U.S. government endorse an Israeli policy that forcibly displaces Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank, including the Israeli government creating conditions on the ground that make Gaza and the West Bank fundamentally uninhabitable for Palestinians to live.



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4) In line with U.S. allies, recognize Palestine as a sovereign state that can live in peace side by side with Israel, and support Palestine's full membership in the United Nations.

5) Redouble efforts and pressure on the Israeli government to ensure freedom of religion, worship and movement for people of all faiths, be they Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Druze or Baha'i.

Additionally, our partners from Lutheran Disaster Response have worked addressing shelter, food, and hygiene needs in refugee camps and informal settlements in Sudan, and our partners from Lutheran World Relief are part of decades long work in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In Congo, they have seen that, while Congo is a vast country of many resources, food insecurity and child malnutrition is severe. The country continues to face acute and complex humanitarian crises characterized by internal displacement and widespread insecurity. Many of our Maryland congregations directly support the work of our partners in Congo and Sudan, and they pray fervently every Sunday to see an end to these humanitarian crises.

In this moment, we need courageous leadership who take the opportunities granted to them to speak with moral clarity, encouraging the federal government to "use its diplomatic, economic, and political influence to prevent further atrocities." (HJ9 text) We need leaders who can speak with legal clarity, condemning acts of violence against civilians, war crimes, and violations of international humanitarian rights laws while reclaiming values of peace, justice, and the dignity and value of all life.

We hope that you take this opportunity granted to you. We also hope that you do not keep this opportunity to yourselves, but make it available to all of your colleagues by giving **HJ9** a favorable report.

Rev. Melody Hession-Sigmon