

Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Rev. Sheridan Allmond, and I serve as Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church. I speak today in opposition to Senate Bill 0172.

As Trustees, our responsibility is fiduciary and legal. We hold church property in trust to ensure that assets given for sacred and charitable purposes are protected, maintained, and used in accordance with the intentions of those who contributed them—past, present, and future.

The Methodist Trust Clause is not an innovation. It is a well-established legal and ecclesial framework that has governed Methodist property for generations. Congregations enter into this arrangement knowingly and voluntarily at the time of incorporation. Courts across the country have consistently recognized its validity under neutral principles of law and the First Amendment.

Senate Bill 0172 would disrupt this settled framework by inviting state intervention into internal church governance and retroactively altering longstanding property agreements. From a trustee perspective, this raises serious concerns about contractual stability, donor intent, and increased litigation risk.

More broadly, the bill sets a precedent that extends beyond Methodists. If the state can redefine the internal property rules of

one denomination, no faith tradition with connectional or hierarchical governance is secure. That is not a narrow fix.

The United Methodist Church already has established, orderly processes to address congregational transitions and property matters. These processes are designed to balance local discernment with broader fiduciary obligations and have functioned without state interference.

For these reasons, and in keeping with our duty to protect charitable assets and religious liberty, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 0172.

Thank you for your consideration.