



Delaware-Maryland Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Testimony Prepared for the
Judicial Proceedings Committee
on
Senate Bill 483
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.

In Maryland we have had an authorized congregation of incarcerated people, women and men, at Jessup since 1985, and at Central Maryland Correctional Facility (a pre-release facility) since 2016: the Community of St. Dysmas. When our congregants are released, we know the challenges that they will have to face in order to live out their dream of returning home making amends to the communities that they harmed. Their records stand in the way of finding a place to live, a place to work, opportunities for education, things that are essential for someone to not only succeed but give back to the community.

Currently, Maryland's petition-based system is costly, confusing, and bureaucratic. As a result, only 2% of eligible Marylanders receive expungement relief, and under the current system it would take 86 years to clear all eligible convictions. Clean Slate is proven, bipartisan, and effective, and it has been implemented in most of Maryland's surrounding states.

We consider this a common-sense bill and we urge a favorable report.

Reverend Melody Hession-Sigmon