



Delaware-Maryland Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Testimony prepared for the
Environment and Transportation Committee
on
House Bill 674
February 22, 2022
Position: **Favorable**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify for the rights of tenants in legal disputes with landlords. I am Lee Hudson, assistant to the bishop for public policy in the Delaware-Maryland Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We are a faith community with three synods in every part of Maryland.

As a resident of, and clergy in the City of Baltimore, I am familiar with eviction as an unfortunate and familiar part of the social landscape. However, the problem of landlord-tenant disputes and evictions is not limited to any one jurisdiction.

One element of the problem is the lack of affordable housing everywhere in the nation, and so, in the State. Our faith community has represented its concerns about that previously. Eviction prompts a subsequent concern for the rights and dignity of people before law.

The pandemic exacerbated a pre-existing condition in housing. Loss of work, wage, and related social supports brought the housing crisis forward. "Maryland Matters" reported in August 2021: *Some 129,000 households in Maryland are currently behind on rent, according to the National Equity Atlas. Roughly 78% of those households include people of color, according to the National Equity Atlas data, and 62% make less than \$50,000 a year.*

House Bill 674 will do little to address that crisis. But it may postpone eviction, homelessness, and retribution for indigence among those thrown into the legal system (often without representation); and who may qualify for authorized housing assistance and await determination of eligibility. It's the least that should be done and the State ought to do it.

We seek a favorable report.

Lee Hudson