



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

Testimony prepared for the
Health and Government Operations Committee
on
House Bill 6
February 9, 2022
Position: **Favorable**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to advocate for access to health care in our State. I am Lee Hudson, assistant to the bishop for public policy in the Delaware-Maryland Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; a faith community with three synods, in every part of Maryland.

In a 2003 national assembly our community committed *to advocate that all people living in the United States of America, Puerto Rico, and U.S. territories have equitable access to a basic level of preventive, acute, and chronic physical and mental health care.*

House Bill 6 will place Maryland in the column of states that include dental coverage in their Medical Assistance programs.

Maryland has done much to expand access to health care with good results for its citizens; and this Committee has done its share of that work.

Dental care is necessary for good health. We humans are more than a collection of body parts and functions. We are an integrated whole. The condition of the region of the mouth needs care and intervention as much as any other anatomical element. Poor dental health is implicated in other illnesses and conditions. To reference a subject within HB765 to be heard in this Committee next week, pre-natal complications affecting maternal health frequently begin with periodontal disease, for example.

Including dental care in Medicaid will surely help reduce disparity of health outcomes for those whom this bill would cover. We note with concern that health disparity occurs with a racial bias. Improving access to appropriate and needed kinds of care is also the best way to manage health cost, for consumers and the State.

For these reasons we urge a favorable report.

Lee Hudson