



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

Testimony Prepared for the
Environment and Transportation Committee
on
House Bill 631
February 22, 2023
Position: **Favorable**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify for care of the gifts of creation. 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 in three judicatories across our State.

Our community addressed concern for a safe, healthy, flourishing environment that can sustain life in “Caring for Creation” (ELCA, 1993. A healthy environment is also a stated concern of our “*Caring for Health*,” 2003.) Stewardship of natural gifts and processes, through conservation and preservation policies, is wise and just because it protects what is for the benefit of all things now living.

And “all things now living” illustrates the need to defend and conserve a web of life. Undeveloped contexts are also habitat; they sequester carbon; they purify air and water; they buffer watersheds. So, we support preservation and conservation in the natural world for the sake of all things now living. For example, forest integrity and extent in Maryland was a stated interest of our community in 2008 (See LOPP/MD testimony before EHEA, Feb. 28, 2008 on SB431).

We previously identified two critical concerns: the constellation of issues from the greenhouse effect, and health- and life-sustaining air quality. Those have arisen as critical issues in international policy discourse, as well. An additional, bellwether issue is the confluence of habitat, species, and the eco- of “all things now living.” (As one interested advocate, I have taken to reporting that we’re living through a Devonian die-off.) Life is disappearing at a catastrophic rate everywhere on the planet. And as of now, the only place the human species has to live is the planet.

House Bill 631 will support the preservation of more undeveloped Maryland geography as beautiful, life-supporting, necessary, naturally occurring space via permanent trusts. We urge such a policy initiative. We urge the care and preservation of created (not owned) gifts within the target goals of **House Bill 631**. We implore a favorable report.

Lee Hudson