

**House Energy and Natural Resources Committee**

**Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 1352**

**Bishop Tessa Moon Leiseth**

**February 7, 2025**

Chairman Porter and members of this Committee, on behalf of the Eastern North Dakota Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, I am submitting testimony in opposition to House Bill 1352.

The current law allows an individual, who is authorized to carry a firearm or dangerous weapon in North Dakota, to possess such a weapon in a church building if authorized by the church's primary religious leader or the governing body of the church. Within the synod, the pastor or the congregation council could grant such authorization. It is a workable law that allows each congregation to determine who may possess concealed firearms or dangerous weapons in its church building.

If enacted, this bill would allow any individual, who is authorized to carry a concealed firearm or dangerous weapon North Dakota, to possess such concealed weapons in church buildings of the approximately 175 churches in the synod – even if a congregation would be opposed to any individual possessing any dangerous weapon with its building.

Essential to the concept of religious liberty, each congregation within the synod should have the right to ensure the safety of its members and should have the right to declare its church building a safe, weapons free zone.

Accordingly, I urge this Committee to vote a “do not pass” recommendation for House Bill 1352.