



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

**February 4, 2020**

**SB 168**

**Electricity – Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard – Qualifying Biomass**

**Senate Finance Committee**

**Position: Support**

The Maryland Catholic Conference (“Conference”) represents the public policy interests of the three Roman Catholic (arch)dioceses serving Maryland: the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington.

Senate Bill 168 removes mill residue, “black liquor,” from eligibility for inclusion as a qualifying biomass in the State’s Renewable Energy Portfolio. Maryland is currently the only state in the region that allows black liquor as an eligible Tier 1 resource.

The Conference supports environmental legislation that recognizes the integral ecosystem in which we live. In his encyclical, *On Care for Our Common Home (Laudato Si’)*, Pope Francis states that “our immense technological development has not been accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience.” While the removal of black liquor as a renewable energy source may seem like a comparatively small step, it is an acknowledgment that the state needs to reconcile this balance.

*Laudato Si’*, however, is not an endorsement of specific public policy proposals; rather, it seeks to illustrate the importance of protecting our common home and issue guidance as to how to listen to all voices in solving this massive global crisis. Pope Francis explains that “[t]o take up these responsibilities and the costs they entail, politicians will inevitably clash with the mindset of short-term gain and results which dominates present-day economics and politics. But if they are courageous, they will attest to their God-given dignity and leave behind a testimony of selfless responsibility.” Senate Bill 168 aims to address some of the needed reforms to energy consumption policies and standards to be set to sustain and achieve a healthy global ecosystem. We encourage discussion around the components and goals outlined in this legislation and pray they are a catalyst for meaningful ecological policy reform.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 168.