



Hearing before the Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment
Maryland General Assembly
February 28, 2023

**Statement of Support (FAVORABLE)
of Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home on
SB 613, Electricity – Community Solar Energy Generating Program**

Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home (MCCH) is a lay-led organization of Catholics from parishes in the three Catholic dioceses in Maryland: the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington. It engages in education about, and advocacy based on, the teachings of the Catholic Church relating to care for creation. MCCH is a voice for the understanding of Catholic social teaching held by a wide array of Maryland Catholics—over 350 Maryland Catholics have already signed our statement of support for key environmental bills in this session of the General Assembly—but should be distinguished from the Maryland Catholic Conference, which represents the public policy interests of the bishops who lead these three dioceses.

MCCH would like to express its strong support for passage of Senate Bill 613, Electricity – Community Solar Energy Generating Program. As Catholics, we see care for God’s creation as an integral part of our faith, as taught by recent Popes, including the forceful statements of Pope Francis. In his 2015 encyclical, entitled *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home*,* Pope Francis calls for a comprehensive response to the threats from climate change, including “an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy.” (no. 26) *Laudato Si’* also contains a call to “integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (no. 49).

Senate Bill 613 embodies both aspects of this broad moral vision. The bill’s focus on making permanent the successful Community Solar Energy Generating Systems Pilot Program will increase the contribution of renewable energy to Maryland’s electric generating capacity. This is responsive to Pope Francis’s call that “the use of highly polluting fossil fuels...be progressively replaced without delay,” especially where sources of renewable energy are widely accessible (no. 165). The bill also sets a floor of 40 percent of the kilowatt-hour output of new community solar systems that must be dedicated to low- and moderate-income subscribers. This provision, combined with changes in law that facilitate consolidated billing of community solar subscription charges and that prohibit sign-up fees and other disincentives for low- and moderate-income subscribers, will ensure real equity in the access of all Marylanders to solar power.

Thank you for your consideration of our views and our respectful request for a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 613.

* The English text of the encyclical, to which the paragraph numbers in the following parentheses refer, can be found at: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_eniclica-laudato-si.html.