



February 15th, 2023

HB 310

Environment and Energy - Investment in Communities With Low- to Moderate-Income Households

**House Environment & Transportation Committee
House Economic Matters Committee**

Position: Favorable

The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 310 would require Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), by December 1, 2023, to develop policies and recommendations to require at least 40% of overall spending on specified programs, projects, and investments to benefit communities with low- to moderate-income households. State and local governmental units, in consultation with MDE, other specified State agencies, and the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities (CEJSC) must, to the extent practicable, invest or direct available and relevant programmatic resources in a manner designed to achieve the investment to benefit communities with low- and moderate-income households. In addition, federal funds appropriated for specified programs and agencies (most of which relate to water quality and water pollution remediation) must also be prioritized to provide funding to communities low- to moderate-income households.

The Conference supports environmental legislation that recognizes the integral ecosystem in which we live and promotes diversity and inclusion in pursuit of the common good. In his encyclical, *On Care for Our Common Home (Laudato Si')*, Pope Francis states that *"We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature."*

The Conference appreciates your consideration and respectfully urges a **favorable** report for House Bill 310.