



**MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE**

March 26, 2024

HB 841

Environment – Plastic Bottle Waste Reduction – Water Bottle Filling Stations and Reporting

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers this testimony as in support of House Bill 841. 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 841 is focused on reducing plastic bottle waste and promoting access to clean, sustainable drinking water through the installation of water bottle filling stations.

In his encyclical letter "Laudato Si'," Pope Francis reminds us of our sacred duty to safeguard the Earth, our common home, and to preserve its beauty and resources for present and future generations. Plastic pollution poses a significant threat to the integrity of creation, contaminating our oceans, rivers, and landscapes, and endangering the health of wildlife and ecosystems. As custodians of God's creation, we are called to take decisive action to address this ecological crisis and restore harmony to the natural world.

Plastic bottled water consumption continues to contribute to environmental degradation and exacerbate the global water crisis. By installing water bottle filling stations in certain new construction, we can promote the use of reusable containers, reduce the demand for single-use plastic bottles, and ensure equitable access to clean water for all people.

Requiring the Department of the Environment to conduct surveys, gather data, and identify methods for plastic bottle waste reduction represents a proactive and responsible approach to addressing the root causes of plastic pollution. By investing in research, education, and outreach initiatives, we can raise awareness about the environmental and health impacts of plastic waste, promote sustainable alternatives, and empower individuals and communities to make informed choices that protect our planet and its inhabitants.

The MCC appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 841.

