



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 29, 2024

HB 1296
Electricity - Offshore Wind Projects - Alterations

House Economic Matters Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers this testimony in support of House Bill 1296. 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 1296 would allow the Public Service Commission to open a revised "Round 2" proceeding to evaluate offshore wind energy project. "Round 2" offshore wind projects are those that are less than 10 miles off of Maryland's coast. This bill could also allow the Commission to increase the amount of offshore wind renewable energy credits sold. An "offshore wind renewable energy credit" or "OREC" means a renewable energy credit equal to the generation attributes of 1 megawatt-hour of electricity that is derived from offshore wind energy.

As a stalwart advocate for Maryland's environment and care for our common home, the Conference supports this bill to the extent that this bill helps Maryland reach its goal of 8,500 megawatts of offshore wind energy capacity by 2031. In his encyclical, *On Care for Our Common Home (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. Pope Francis tells us, "when we speak of the 'environment', what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it. Recognizing the reasons why a given area is polluted requires a study of the workings of society, its economy, its behaviour patterns, and the ways it grasps reality. Given the scale of change, it is no longer possible to find a specific, discrete answer for each part of the problem."

As such, clean energy generated from wind is an important tool in a diverse array of methods by which we can reduce our carbon footprint. Maryland's coastline is a unique opportunity to wind energy generation that not every state can utilize, and we must do our part in harnessing that tool for the good of our common home. It is for this reason that we request a favorable report on House Bill 1296.