



Hearing before the House Appropriations Committee
Maryland General Assembly
February 10, 2026

**Statement of Support (FAVORABLE)
of Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home on
HB 437, Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2026**

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 upon, the teachings of the Catholic Church relating to care for creation and respect for all life. MCCH is a grassroots voice for the understanding of Catholic social teaching held by a wide array of Maryland Catholics. In the 2025 Legislative Session, over 700 Maryland Catholics from 45 different Catholic parishes and religious communities across the State joined together through MCCH to support several key environmental bills under consideration by the General Assembly. MCCH is independent, though, and should be distinguished as an organization from the Maryland Catholic Conference, which represents the public policy positions of the bishops who lead these three dioceses.

MCCH would like to express its strong support for passage of House Bill 437, the Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2026. As Catholics, we view care for God's creation and care for vulnerable groups in society as an integral part of our faith, as taught by recent Popes, including the forceful statements of Pope Francis in his encyclical, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*¹ (2015), and in his more recent apostolic exhortation, *Laudate Deum*² (2023). Pope Leo XIV has made clear that he is continuing the priority that Pope Francis and his predecessors gave to environmental protection.

The provisions of House Bill 437 are responsive to the challenges of building a strong, dependable, less-polluting, and equitable transportation system, consistent with the moral call to action that is part of Catholic social teaching.

It would require the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to estimate the increased emissions resulting from major capital projects, such as highway widenings and the associated increase in vehicle traffic, fund projects to offset that increase in emissions, and balance spending on transportation projects with low or no associated emissions (sidewalks, crosswalks, bike paths, transit) with projects that increase emissions.

These new policies and requirements will expand and improve transportation choices, which will contribute to an integral improvement to the quality of human life, especially for those who are poor.

¹ The English text of the encyclical, to which the paragraph numbers in the parentheses, can be found at: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.

² The English text of the apostolic exhortation, to which the paragraph numbers in the parentheses refer, can be found at: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/20231004-laudate-deum.html.

These improvements include reduction in traffic congestion (which contributes to air pollution) and reduced traffic injuries and fatalities, in addition to reducing the climate pollution that leads to harmful environmental consequences that are borne disproportionately by vulnerable citizens and communities. These provisions of House Bill 437 will help our State to meet the environmental and moral imperatives of aligning our transportation and climate policies.

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis identifies transportation as a key factor in the quality of life in urban areas. He describes transportation's interlocking challenges of reducing pollution, developing humane urban design, and improving access to and the quality of public transportation as follows:

Many cars, used by one or more people, circulate in cities, causing traffic congestion, raising the level of pollution, and consuming enormous quantities of non-renewable energy. This makes it necessary to build more roads and parking areas which spoil the urban landscape. Many specialists agree on the need to give priority to public transportation. Yet some measures needed will not prove easily acceptable to society unless substantial improvements are made in the systems themselves.... (*Laudato Si'*, no. 153)

In *Laudate Deum*, Pope Francis emphasizes the need to act now—and to act courageously and decisively—to correct our relationship with our common home. We cannot afford a failure of “conscience and responsibility.” (*Laudate Deum*, no. 52)

Finally, Pope Leo XIV has continued the emphases placed on environmental stewardship by Pope Francis, calling on us to shift “from environmental discourse to an ecological conversion that transforms both personal and communal lifestyles.”³

For these reasons we strongly urge your support for this bill. Thank you for your consideration of our views and our respectful request for a **favorable** report on House Bill 437.

³ “Address of The Holy Father Leo XIV to the Participants in the ‘Raising Hope’ Conference on the Tenth Anniversary of the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*,” 1 October 2025, available at <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/speeches/2025/october/documents/20251001-conferenza-mariapoli.html>.