



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 24, 2021

SB 674

**Environment - Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities - Reform**

**Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee**

**Position: Support**

The Maryland Catholic Conference (“Conference”) represents the public policy interests of the three Roman Catholic (arch) dioceses serving Maryland: the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington.

Senate Bill 674 alters the membership of the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities; requiring the membership of the Commission to reflect the diversity of the State to the extent practicable; specifying the term of certain members; requiring the Department of the Environment to provide a new member with an orientation reviewing environmental justice issues in the State; altering the manner in which a chair is chosen for the Commission; requiring the Commission to meet at least six times per calendar year.

The Conference supports environmental legislation that recognizes the integral ecosystem in which we live and promotes diversity and inclusion in pursuit of a common good. In his encyclical, *On Care for Our Common Home (Laudato Si’)*, Pope Francis states that “*What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up? This question not only concerns the environment in isolation; the issue cannot be approached piecemeal.*”

*Laudato Si’* is not an endorsement of specific public policy proposals; rather, it seeks to illustrate the importance of protecting our common home and issue guidance as to how to listen to all voices in solving this massive global crisis. Pope Francis explains that “[t]o take up these responsibilities and the costs they entail, politicians will inevitably clash with the mindset of short-term gain and results which dominates present-day economics and politics. But if they are courageous, they will attest to their God-given dignity and leave behind a testimony of selfless responsibility.” Senate Bill 674 aims to address some of the needed reforms policies and standards to be set to sustain and achieve a healthy global ecosystem.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 674.