



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

March 9th, 2022

SB 791

Natural Resources - Land Conservation - Establishment of Goals and Programs (Maryland the Beautiful Act)

Senate Budget & Taxation 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 791 establishes certain goals and programs related to land conservation; establishing the Local Land Trust Revolving Loan Program to provide loans to certain land trusts to purchase land for conservation purposes; establishing a Land Preservation Rapid Response Advisory Committee to review loan applications and make recommendations on which projects to fund; establishing the Local Land Trust Revolving Loan Fund; requiring the Governor to include \$10,000,000 in the fiscal year 2024 budget bill for the Fund.

In his encyclical, *On Care for Our Common Home (Laudato Si')*, Pope Francis tells us, “Whenever these questions are raised, some react by accusing others of irrationally attempting to stand in the way of progress and human development. But we need to grow in the conviction that a decrease in the pace of production and consumption can at times give rise to another form of progress and development. Efforts to promote a sustainable use of natural resources are not a waste of money, but rather an investment capable of providing other economic benefits in the medium term... We know how unsustainable is the behavior of those who constantly consume and destroy, while others are not yet able to live in a way worthy of their human dignity”.

Senate Bill 791 aims to address the much needed investment in conservation policies and projects to be set to sustain and achieve a healthy global ecosystem. We encourage discussion around the components and goals outlined in this legislation and hope they are a catalyst for positive ecological outcomes.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 791.