



Hearing before the House Committee on Economic Matters
Maryland General Assembly
March 4, 2022

**Statement of Support (FAVORABLE)
of Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home on
HB 708, Comprehensive Climate Solutions**

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 on, the teachings of the Catholic Church relating to care for creation. MCCH is a voice for the understanding of Catholic social teaching held by a wide array of Maryland Catholics, but should be distinguished from the Maryland Catholic Conference, which represents the public policy interests of the bishops who lead these three dioceses.

MCCH would like to express its strong support for passage of House Bill 708, an Act concerning Comprehensive Climate Solutions. As Catholics, we see care for God’s creation as an integral part of our faith, as taught by recent Popes, including the forceful statements of Pope Francis. In his 2015 encyclical, entitled *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home*,* Pope Francis calls for a comprehensive response to the threats from climate change, including “an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy.” (p. 26) *Laudato Si’* also contains a call to “integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (p. 49).

House Bill 708 embodies this broad moral vision. The bill’s focus on upgrading Maryland’s climate goals and programs, to reflect the deepening understanding in the scientific community concerning the alarming pace of climate change and its negative impacts, is consistent with Pope Francis’s stated view that the climate crisis constitutes an emergency. Its provisions to encourage the phase-out of fossil fuel use in new construction are consistent with Pope Francis’s support for the transition to renewable energy. Its focus on action that will benefit Maryland’s communities that are disproportionately impacted by climate change—through programs such as the Maryland Climate Justice Corps Program—is an appropriate response to the impacts of pollution and climate change on overburdened communities in the State. Its provisions for job training and creation are responsive to long-standing Catholic teaching on the dignity of work and the rights of workers. For all these reasons, MCCH encourages the passage of House Bill 708.

Thank you for your consideration of our views and our respectful request for a **favorable** report on House Bill 708.

* The English text of the encyclical, to which the paragraph numbers in the following parentheses refer, can be found at: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_eniclica-laudato-si.html.