



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

January 19, 2022

HB61

Charter Counties - Enforcement of Local Building Performance Laws (Building Energy Performance Standards Act of 2022)

Environment and Transportation Committee

Position: Information

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.

House Bill 61 would authorize charter counties to provide for the enforcement of certain local building energy performance laws by imposing civil fines not exceeding \$10 per square foot of gross floor area that would generally relate to building energy performance.

The breadth of the Catholic Church’s institutions includes hundreds of schools, parishes, hospitals and other organizations that serve people and communities in need in Maryland. Out of concern for unforeseen local legislation that might seriously affect the monetary resources to carry out the mission of these, as well as thousands of other Maryland nonprofits (many of which are housed in older buildings), we respectfully suggest that an **exception amendment be provided for nonprofit organization properties**, commensurate with the attached.

In his encyclical, *On Care for Our Common Home (Laudato Si')*, Pope Francis tells us “*Attempts to resolve all problems through uniform regulations or technical interventions can lead to overlooking the complexities of local problems which demand the active participation of all members of the community. New processes taking shape cannot always fit into frameworks imported from outside; they need to be based in the local culture itself. As life and the world are dynamic realities, so our care for the world must also be flexible and dynamic. Merely technical solutions run the risk of addressing symptoms and not the more serious underlying problems. There is a need to respect the rights of peoples and cultures, and to appreciate that the development of a social group presupposes an historical process which takes place within a cultural context and demands the constant and active involvement of local people from within their proper culture. Nor can the notion of the quality of life be imposed from without, for quality of life must be understood within the world of symbols and customs proper to each human group*”.

House Bill 61 aims to address the much needed reforms to energy consumption policies and standards. However, any intervention must be accomplished in an equitable and fair way that does not harm the ability of such entities to serve the community, particularly the underprivileged.



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Proposed Amendments to HB 61

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AMENDMENT No. 1

On page 2, line 19, after “AREA”, insert “(II) A COUNTY SHALL NOT ENFORCE CIVIL FINES FOR BUILDING ENERGY PERFORMANCE LAWS IN EXCESS OF THE STATUTORY LIMITATIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH SUBSECTION (b)(1) OF THIS SECTION ON REAL PROPERTY EXEMPT FROM PROPERTY TAX”.

Explanation: Private schools, hospitals, day care centers, homeless shelters, and other nonprofits provide services that government might otherwise be required to offer. Through tax-exemptions, governments support the work of nonprofits and receive a direct benefit and therefore this type of law should not apply to them.

AMENDMENT No. 2

On page 2, line 20, strike “(II) and insert “(III)”.