



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 15, 2022

SB 524

**Public Utilities - Energy Efficiency and Conservation Programs - Energy Performance
Targets and Low-Income Housing**

Senate Finance 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 524 requires the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to procure or provide energy efficiency and conservation (EE&C) programs and services for electricity customers for the 2022-2024 EmPOWER Maryland Program cycle, subject to specified requirements. The EE&C programs and services must be designed to achieve a target annual incremental gross energy savings of at least 0.4% per year, compared to 2019, starting in 2023. The bill also establishes (1) the Green and Healthy Task Force, staffed by DHCD and (2) several reporting and planning requirements for DHCD and the Public Service Commission (PSC), including that DHCD develop a plan to provide energy efficiency retrofits to all low-income households.

The Conference supports environmental legislation that recognizes the integral ecosystem in which we live and promotes diversity and inclusion in pursuit of the common good. In his encyclical, *On Care for Our Common Home (Laudato Si’)*, Pope Francis states that “*We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.*”

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 “*The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet... The impact of present imbalances is also seen in the premature death of many of the poor.*”

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 524.