



January 31, 2023

SB 144

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

Senate Education, Energy, & Environment Committee

Position: Support

The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 144 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 2024-2026 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, compared to 2016, of at least 0.53% in 2024, 0.72% in 2025, and 1.0% in 2026. 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 by 2031.

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."*

The Conference appreciates your consideration and respectfully urges a **favorable** report for Senate Bill 144.