



Hearing before the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Maryland General Assembly
February 2, 2023

**Statement of Support (FAVORABLE)
of Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home on
SB 158, Pesticide Registration - PFAS Testing - Requirements**

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 Senate Bill 158, Pesticide Registration - PFAS Testing - Requirements. As Catholics and environmentalists, we are guided by the call to action of Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical, entitled *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*.^{*} There, Pope Francis acknowledged that "some forms of pollution are part of people's daily experience. Exposure to atmospheric pollutants produces a broad spectrum of health hazards, especially for the poor, and causes millions of premature deaths. People take sick, for example, from breathing high levels of smoke from fuels used in cooking or heating. There is also pollution that affects everyone, caused by transport, industrial fumes, substances which contribute to the acidification of soil and water, fertilizers, insecticides, fungicides, herbicides and agrottoxins in general. Technology, which, linked to business interests, is presented as the only way of solving these problems, in fact proves incapable of seeing the mysterious network of relations between things and so sometimes solves one problem only to create others." (no. 20)

The aim of Senate Bill 158 is to address the concerns raised by Pope Francis regarding exposure to pesticides and the growing evidence of danger from PFAS (Per- and Poly-fluoroalkyl Substances). Commonly known as forever chemicals—because PFAS do not break down in nature and because these chemicals can easily migrate into the air, dust, food, soil, and water—the depth and reach of their harmful exposure is unconscionable. The strict limitations in Senate Bill 158 on levels of PFAS, first in pesticides against mosquitoes and then in all pesticides, responds to the adverse health impacts that PFAS-containing pesticide formulations inflict on all of the residents of this State. It is for these reasons that we request a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 158. Thank you for your consideration of our views.

^{*} The English text of the encyclical, to which the paragraph number in the parenthesis below refers, can be found at: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.