



Hearing before the Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment
Maryland General Assembly
February 23, 2023

**Statement of Support (FAVORABLE)
of Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home on
SB 743, Climate, Labor, and Environmental Equity Act of 2023**

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 743, the Climate, Labor, and Environmental Equity Act of 2023. The bill echoes key themes that have been part of Catholic social teachings for over 130 years and that have found recent expression in Pope Francis's 2015 encyclical, entitled *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*,¹ in which Pope Francis issues 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" (no. 49).

- The bill ensures that environmental permits are informed by a climate and environmental equity evaluation, in cases where "a permit may impact an underserved community or an overburdened community." This is responsive to Pope Francis's teaching that "every ecological approach needs to incorporate a social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and the underprivileged" (no. 93). The provision that health impact assessments may also be conducted is consistent with Pope Francis's view that environmental impact assessments "should be linked to a study of working conditions and possible effects on people's physical and mental health, on the local economy and on public safety" (no. 183).
- The bill's provision that the Department of Labor annually report whether State agency decisions "support businesses that promote equitable labor and wage standards" is in line with long-standing Catholic social teaching that "All people have the right to economic initiative, to productive work, to just wages and benefits, to decent working conditions as well as to organize and join unions or other associations."²

For these reasons, MCCH supports enactment of the bill. Thank you for your consideration of our views and our respectful request for a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 743.

¹ 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_enciclica-laudato-si.html.

² United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "A Catholic Framework for Economic Life" (2015), no. 5, available at <https://www.usccb.org/resources/catholic-framework-economic-life-0>.