



Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home

Responding to the cry of the Earth
and the cry of the poor.

Hearing before the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
Maryland General Assembly
February 28, 2023

Statement of Support (FAVORABLE) of Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home on SB 689, Public Utilities – Energy Efficiency and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions – Alterations and 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—over 350 Maryland Catholics have already signed our statement of support for key environmental bills in this session of the General Assembly—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 689, Public Utilities – Energy Efficiency and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions – Alterations and Requirements. As Catholics, we see a strong link between care for God’s creation and concern for the poor, as both are an integral part of our faith. In his 2015 encyclical, entitled *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home*,* Pope Francis calls for a comprehensive response to the threats from climate change, including “an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy.” (no. 26) He identifies “promoting ways of conserving energy” as an important line of action, including “removing from the market products which are less energy efficient or more polluting...and encouraging the construction and repair of buildings aimed at reducing their energy consumption and levels of pollution.” (no. 180) *Laudato Si’* also contains 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 provisions of Senate Bill 689 build on the success of the EmPOWER program in ways that are consistent with the broad vision of Pope Francis. Senate Bill 689 ends incentives for the use of fossil fuels in home appliances and creates new incentives for electrification, efficient electric appliances, and home heating. Its provisions expand access for low-income households to state and federal funds for energy efficiency and whole-home retrofits. The bill will make a positive difference for low-income Marylanders, while also making a positive difference for the environment.

For these reasons we strongly urge your support for this bill. Thank you for your consideration of our views and our respectful request for a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 689.

* 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.