



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 8th, 2023

HB 840

Climate, Labor, and Environmental Equity Act of 2023

House Environment & Transportation Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland 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.

House Bill 840 requires the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to conduct a climate and environmental equity evaluation of a permit application if, after conducting an Environmental Justice (EJ) score review required under current law, MDE determines that issuing an approval for the permit may impact an underserved community or an overburdened community.

In his encyclical, *On Care for Our Common Home (Laudato Si')*, Pope Francis tells us, “Whenever these questions are raised, some react by accusing others of irrationally attempting to stand in the way of progress and human development. But we need to grow in the conviction that a decrease in the pace of production and consumption can at times give rise to another form of progress and development. Efforts to promote a sustainable use of natural resources are not a waste of money, but rather an investment capable of providing other economic benefits in the medium term...We know how unsustainable the behavior of those who constantly consume and destroy, while others are not yet able to live in a way worthy of their human dignity”.

House Bill 840 aims to address the much-needed investment in climate and environmental equity in underserved communities within Maryland. We encourage discussion around the components and goals outlined in this legislation and hope they are a catalyst for positive ecological outcomes to our most vulnerable populations.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and respectfully urges a **favorable** report for House Bill 840.