



CENTRAL MARYLAND ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

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Maryland House of Delegates
State House, H-101
State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Delegate,

We are writing to you as members of the Ecumenical Leaders Group. The Ecumenical Leaders Group (ELG) is made up of the senior leaders (bishops and executives) of various Christian faith communities in Maryland – Episcopal, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, and United Church of Christ.

The United Nations passed a resolution in summer 2022 that recognized environmental health as a fundamental human right.

The Maryland Environmental Policy Act of 1973 (MEPA) was a ground-breaking document. It is composed of two essential elements:

1. The assertion that “each person has a fundamental and inalienable right to a healthful environment” .
2. That all State agencies “identify, develop, and adopt methods and procedures” to implement that right, including ensuring that:
 - *Environmental amenities and values are given appropriate consideration in planning and decision making along with economic and technical considerations;*
 - *Appropriate alternatives to present policies, programs, procedures and conflicts are studied and considered*
 - *The public is involved, utilizing “the fullest practicable provision of timely public information and understanding”*

These are lofty goals that could achieve great gains for Maryland. Yet for the past fifty years, the State has largely ignored this mandate and failed to develop methods and procedures that would fully implement this right.

On the fiftieth anniversary of the Maryland Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), It is time to fix that.

The Maryland Environmental Policy Act - MEPA@50 Resolution asks the Maryland General Assembly to reinvigorate MEPA by reaffirming its principles and using them to guide its deliberations.

It calls on the administration to re-dedicate itself to further the development and implementation of environmental laws, practices, and policies called for by MEPA, for the benefit of current and future generations.

A fully implemented Maryland Environmental Policy Act would create...

- Guidelines to help agencies craft and implement appropriate policies,
- Promote meaningful processes for public information and participation,
- Incorporate environmental justice definitions and processes in decision-making,
- Establish timely processes for keeping permits up-to-date... and more

Without MEPA's enforcement, there is still no unified, coherent foundation upon which our State's agencies make their environmental policies, including ways to inform and engage the public, ways to assess environmental justice, ways to ensure that laws are properly implemented.

We have an opportunity with the new Governor and this new administration to strengthen our environmental policies and laws, better implement those already on the books, and embed protections for public health and environmental justice in all our agencies and decision-making.

With Blessings,
The Ecumenical Leaders Group of Maryland

The Rev. William J. Gohl Jr.
Bishop
Delaware -Maryland Synod, ELCA
Chairperson ELG

Rev. Freeman L Palmer
Conference Minister
Central Atlantic Conference
United Church of Christ

Rev. Dellyne Hinton
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Rt. Reverend Eugene Taylor Sutton
Bishop of Maryland
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Most Rev. Denis J. Madden
Bishop
The Archdiocese of Baltimore

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General Presbyter
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