



MARYLAND  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE

March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**SJ0004**

**Environmental Human Rights**

**Education, Energy, and the Environment 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.

SJ0004 reaffirms the principle enshrined in the Maryland Environmental Policy Act that every person has the fundamental and inalienable right to a healthful environment; and requiring the State to rededicate itself, its agencies, and all concerned stakeholders to furthering the development, implementation, and enforcement of certain environmental laws, practices, and policies for the benefit of both current and future generations.

As Pope Francis has written, climate change "*represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day*" (*Laudato Si'*, no. 25), threatening the wellbeing of peoples and the environment. Catholic social teaching envisions a sustainable and authentic human development, where technological solutions respect the principle of integral ecology and consider social, economic and ecological considerations.

SJ0004 echoes key themes in Catholic social teachings and is in harmony with various elements of Pope Francis's *encyclical Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*. Its emphasis on an "inalienable right" to a healthy environment fits squarely with Catholic social teaching on the dignity of the human person and our responsibilities for future generations. Its description of "natural resources for the benefit of every person" echoes the Church's teaching that the "*gifts of the earth belong to everyone*" (*LS*, p. 71). Likewise, the resolution addresses the important issue of accountability by ensuring that matters of environmental justice can be addressed by all of Maryland's diverse citizenry.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and respectfully urges a **favorable** report for SJ0004.

