



**MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE**

February 20, 2024

SB 956

**Environment – Water Pollution Control – Protecting State Waters from PFAS Pollution
(Protecting State Waters From PFAS Pollution Act)**

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers this testimony as in support of Senate Bill 956. The 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.

Senate Bill 956 would establish discharge limits for PFAS chemicals in any water and would require significant industrial user to reduce PFAS chemicals from the water it discharges to publicly owned treatment works and to store, reuse and dispose of certain PFAS chemicals in a certain manner.

PFAS are resistant to degradation and bioaccumulate in the environment and the human body. Prolonged exposure to these chemicals can cause cancer, thyroid problems, birth defects, and reproductive, developmental, and immune system disruptions. Of particular concern is a growing body of research that indicates pregnant and nursing mothers, and their children, are especially affected. Such exposure occurs through polluted drinking water, food, soil, dust and the use of consumer products manufactured using PFAS. The widespread utilization of these “forever chemicals” has resulted in significant environmental contamination.

In the encyclical letter “Laudato Si’,” Pope Francis calls for an integral ecology that recognizes the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic concerns. When industrial activities contaminate our water sources with PFAS chemicals, they jeopardize the health and dignity of communities that rely on clean water for drinking, agriculture, and recreation. Legislation requiring significant industrial users to reduce PFAS discharges to publicly owned treatment works is a crucial step towards safeguarding this precious resource and upholding the common good.

Responsible management of PFAS chemicals is essential to prevent further harm to the environment and human health. Storage, reuse, and proper disposal of these hazardous substances are necessary to prevent their accumulation in soil, water, and food sources. By imposing requirements on significant industrial users to manage PFAS in a responsible manner, we can mitigate the risks posed by these chemicals and protect the integrity of creation for future generations.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 956.