



# Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home

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

Hearing before the Senate Finance Committee  
Maryland General Assembly  
February 28, 2024

**Statement of Support (FAVORABLE)  
of Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home on  
SB 681, Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2024**

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 400 Maryland Catholics have already signed our statement of support for key environmental bills in this session of the General Assembly—but should be distinguished as an organization 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 681, the Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2024. As Catholics, we view care for God’s creation and care for vulnerable groups in society as an integral part of our faith, as taught by recent Popes, including the forceful statements of Pope Francis in his encyclical, *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home*<sup>1</sup> (2015), and in his more recent apostolic exhortation, *Laudate Deum*<sup>2</sup> (2023).

The provisions of Senate Bill 681 are responsive to the challenges of building a strong, dependable, less-polluting, and equitable transportation system, consistent with the moral call to action that is part of Catholic social teaching. By requiring the Maryland Department of Transportation and regional transportation planning agencies to measure and mitigate any increases in climate pollution and vehicle miles traveled caused by planned highway expansion projects over \$10 million, this bill will spur actions to create a more balanced and integral transportation system. These actions may include improvements and expansions to public transit, smarter and more humane community design that locates jobs and amenities near where people live and near transit, expansion of opportunities for people to work from their homes through increased broadband access, and creation of protected infrastructure for commuting by bike—all ways to expand and improve transportation choices (which will contribute to an integral improvement to the quality of human life) while reducing climate pollution.

The improvements to Maryland’s transportation policies and systems that will occur as a result of this bill will help our State to meet the environmental and moral imperative and challenge to align our transportation and climate policies.

In *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis identifies transportation as a key factor in the quality of life in urban areas. He describes transportation’s interlocking challenges of reducing pollution, developing humane urban design, and improving access to and the quality of public transportation as follows:

Many cars, used by one or more people, circulate in cities, causing traffic congestion, raising the level of pollution, and consuming enormous quantities of non-renewable energy. This makes it necessary to build more roads and parking areas which spoil the urban landscape. Many specialists agree on the need to give

priority to public transportation. Yet some measures needed will not prove easily acceptable to society unless substantial improvements are made in the systems themselves.... (*Laudato Si'*, no. 153)

In *Laudate Deum*, Pope Francis emphasizes the need to act now—and to act courageously and decisively—to correct our relationship with our common home. We cannot afford a failure of “conscience and responsibility.” (*Laudate Deum*, no. 52)

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 681.

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<sup>1</sup> The English text of the encyclical, to which the paragraph numbers in the parentheses, can be found at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html).

<sup>2</sup> The English text of the apostolic exhortation, to which the paragraph numbers in the parentheses refer, can be found at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/20231004-laudate-deum.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/20231004-laudate-deum.html).