



Hearing before the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Maryland General Assembly
February 11, 2025

**Statement of Support (FAVORABLE)
of Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home for
SB 134, Solid Waste Disposal Surcharge and Wasted Food Reduction and
Diversion Fund and Grant Programs - Established**

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 upon, the teachings of the Catholic Church relating to care for creation and respect for all life. MCCH is a grassroots voice for the understanding of Catholic social teaching held by a wide array of Maryland Catholics. In the 2024 Legislative Session, 570 Maryland Catholics from 22 different Catholic parishes and religious communities across the State joined together through MCCH to support several key environmental bills under consideration by the General Assembly. MCCH is independent, though, and should be distinguished as an organization from the Maryland Catholic Conference, which represents the public policy positions of the bishops who lead these three dioceses.

Because we are attuned both to the cry of a distressed Earth and the cry of the poor who suffer first and foremost from a warming planet, **MCCH would like to express our strong support for Senate Bill 134 Solid Waste Disposal Surcharge and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Fund and Grant Programs - Established.**

Americans currently waste about 60 million tons of food (40 percent of our entire food supply) per year.¹ These astounding numbers raise serious concerns.

Our Catholic tradition recognizes that food production, distribution, and consumption have multiple moral dimensions, especially in relation to the poor, whose dietary habits and accessibility to healthy food are impacted by their social and political vulnerability. Our agricultural system, no less than our economic and political systems, affects human dignity.

The U.S. Catholic bishops, along with organizations like the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, have had a special interest in food and agriculture for most of the last century. In 2003 they reemphasized this interest in *For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food: Catholic Reflections on Food, Farmers, and Farmworkers*, a pastoral document that offered a moral framework and action agenda for agricultural issues based on Catholic social teachings. Part Five explicitly notes that “Farmers should

¹ Recycle Track Systems, *Food Waste in America in 2025: Statistics and Facts*, available at <https://www.rts.com/resources/guides/food-waste-america/?form=MG0AV3>.

expand the use of environmentally sustainable methods so that farmland in the United States can provide food for generations to come.”²

Pope Francis has also spoken clearly on food/waste related issues. In his 2015 encyclical, entitled *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home*,³ he asserted that “we know that approximately a third of all food produced is discarded, and whatever food is thrown out it is as if [it] were stolen from the table of the poor.” (*Laudato Si’*, no. 50)

In an earlier speech in 2013, Pope Francis decried the “culture of waste” that has “made us insensitive to wasting and throwing out excess foodstuffs which is especially condemnable when, in every part of the world, unfortunately, many people and families suffer hunger and malnutrition.” He stated that this insensitive “mentality” related directly to human life insofar as the human person is “no longer seen as a primary value to be respected and safeguarded, especially if they are poor or disabled, if they are not yet useful — like the unborn child — or are no longer of any use — like the elderly person.” He concluded by calling on us to “combat the culture of waste and of throwing out....”⁴

As Maryland Catholic constituents, **we support Senate Bill 134** because this bill—

- revitalizes Maryland’s stagnant recycling rate and helps prevent food waste and losses from uneaten food;
- spurs composting and alternative infrastructures to polluting landfills and incinerators (which, because of their locations, often adversely impact overburdened and low-income people);
- provides direct benefits to local communities and vulnerable populations; and
- generates revenues for important food waste reduction programs (i.e., the Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Program, the On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant Program, and the County Wasted Food Reduction Block Grant Program) and saves all taxpayers money from building future disposal sites.

For the above 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 134.

² U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food: Catholic Reflections on Food, Farmers, and Farmworkers* - Part 5, available at <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/agriculture-nutrition-rural-issues/for-i-was-hungry-pastoral-reflection-part-5>.

³ The English text of the encyclical, to which the paragraph numbers in the parentheses refer, can be found at: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.

⁴ Pope Francis, General Audience, 5 June 2013, available at https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130605_udienza-generale.html.