



Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home

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

Hearing before the House Environment and Transportation Committee
Maryland General Assembly
February 10, 2026

**Statement of Support (FAVORABLE)
of Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home on
HB 345, Affordable Solar Act**

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 2025 Legislative Session, over 700 Maryland Catholics from 45 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 its strong support for the passage of House Bill 345, the Affordable Solar Act.**

As Catholics, we are guided by the teachings of Pope Leo XIV, Pope Francis, and their predecessors, which have given priority to (1) care for Earth's environment, (2) concern for the economic burdens experienced by the poor, and (3) protection for the workers whose labor is essential to building our energy future.

- In his 2015 encyclical, entitled *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*,¹ Pope Francis called for a comprehensive response to the threats from climate change, including especially "an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced (by) substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy." (*Laudato Si'*, no. 26)
- In his 2023 apostolic exhortation on the climate crisis, *Laudate Deum*²—a follow-up to *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis sounds an even more urgent cry to do much more about reducing carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions. "I have realized that our responses have not been adequate, while the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point. In addition to this possibility, it is indubitable that the impact of climate change will increasingly prejudice the lives and families of many

¹ 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.

² The English text of this 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.

persons. We will feel its effects in the areas of healthcare, sources of employment, access to resources, housing, and forced migrations.” (*Laudate Deum*, no. 2)

- Pope Leo XIV has continued the emphases placed on environmental stewardship by Pope Francis, calling on us to shift “from environmental discourse to an ecological conversion that transforms both personal and communal lifestyles.”³

We are moving too slowly in Maryland, where we have the power to make choices to support truly clean and renewable energy. Emergent technologies, such as portable solar power devices, open new possibilities for utilization of solar energy by low- and moderate-income residents of apartment complexes. Our state regulations need to be updated to allow these devices to be sold and installed in Maryland. Further, aspects of Maryland’s current solar energy incentive program need to be changed, so that utility-scale solar projects are built with the best value for ratepayers, and that distributed and community solar projects receive incentive prices that enable their construction. The goal should be to have a system in which each type of solar power project receives enough of an economic incentive to be built, but that no sector receives more incentives than are necessary. This would be important as excessive utility costs disproportionately impact low- and moderate-income Marylanders. Finally, workers in Maryland who labor on projects to build and maintain our energy infrastructure deserve fair wages and benefits, in keeping with Catholic social teaching that:

All people have the right to economic initiative, to productive work, to just wages and benefits, to decent working conditions as well as to organize and join unions or other associations.⁴

The Affordable Solar Act is responsive to all of these concerns and provides a path forward to promoting faster deployment of cost-effective solar power in Maryland. It will enable new energy solutions at both distributed scale (e.g., rooftop solar) and utility scale that will serve Maryland’s electricity demands economically. The Affordable Solar Act will also provide important protection for labor to ensure that Maryland’s workers on utility-scale solar projects receive fair wages and benefits for their work in building a sound energy future.

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 House Bill 345, the Affordable Solar Act.

³ “Address of The Holy Father Leo XIV to the Participants in the ‘Raising Hope’ Conference on the Tenth Anniversary of the Encyclical *Laudato Si’*,” 1 October 2025, available at <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/speeches/2025/october/documents/20251001-conferenza-mariapoli.html>.

⁴ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “A Catholic Framework for Economic Life” (2015), no. 5, available at <https://www.usccb.org/resources/catholic-framework-economic-life-0>.