



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

January 20, 2021

**HB 51
Zoning - Environmental Justice Considerations**

House Environment and Transportation

Position: Support

The Maryland Catholic Conference (“Conference”) represents the public policy interests of the three Roman Catholic (arch)dioceses serving Maryland: the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington.

House Bill 51 requires a local governing body, on application by a property owner for a special exception to construct or operate a landfill in an area zoned for residential use, to require an environmental justice analysis, paid for by the property owner, describing any potentially adverse environmental, health, and economic impacts to the area; requiring the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities to recommend strategies for State oversight of local zoning decisions that present environmental justice concern

The Conference supports environmental legislation that recognizes the integral ecosystem in which we live. In his encyclical, *On Care for Our Common Home (Laudato Si’)*, Pope Francis states that “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up? This question not only concerns the environment in isolation; the issue cannot be approached piecemeal.”

Laudato Si’ is not an endorsement of specific public policy proposals; rather, it seeks to illustrate the importance of protecting our common home and issue guidance as to how to listen to all voices in solving this massive global crisis. Pope Francis explains that “[t]o take up these responsibilities and the costs they entail, politicians will inevitably clash with the mindset of short-term gain and results which dominates present-day economics and politics. But if they are courageous, they will attest to their God-given dignity and leave behind a testimony of selfless responsibility.” House Bill 51 aims to address some of the needed reforms policies and standards to be set to sustain and achieve a healthy global ecosystem. We encourage discussion around the components and goals outlined in this legislation and hope they are a catalyst for meaningful ecological policy reform.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 51.