



Hearing before the House Committee on Environment and Transportation
Maryland General Assembly
February 23, 2022

**Statement of Support (FAVORABLE)
of Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home on
HB 596, Constitutional Amendment - Environmental Rights**

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, but should be distinguished 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 House Bill 596, the Maryland Constitutional Amendment on Environmental Human Rights. We see the Amendment as expressing well our Catholic, interfaith, and human rights values. The language in the Amendment echoes key themes in Catholic social teachings and is in harmony with various elements of Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (LS). Its emphasis on an "inalienable right" to a healthy environment fits squarely with Catholic social teaching on the dignity of the human person and our responsibilities for future generations. Its description of "natural resources for the benefit of every person" echoes the Church's teaching that the "gifts of the earth belong to everyone" (LS, p. 71). Likewise, the Amendment addresses the important issue of accountability (LS, p. 61) by ensuring that matters of environmental justice can be legally addressed by all of Maryland's diverse citizenry. This bill is also a legislative initiative that has drawn support from a wide array of faith communities.

Thank you for your consideration of our views and our respectful request for a **favorable** report on House Bill 596.