



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
March 15, 2022

Statement of Support (FAVORABLE) of Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home on SB 616, Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard – Eligible Sources – Waste-to-Energy and Refuse-Derived Fuel

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 Senate Bill 616, dealing with eligible sources for Maryland's Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard. As Catholics, we see care for God's creation as an integral part of our faith, as taught by recent Popes, including the forceful statements of Pope Francis. In his 2015 encyclical, entitled *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*,* Pope Francis specifically identifies the development of renewable energy as a priority: "There is 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, for example, substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy." (p. 26) He also advocates for "removing from the market products which are less energy efficient or more polluting" (p. 180). The provision of renewable energy credits to sources of energy that generate emissions creates a market distortion that encourages such pollution and weakens the incentives for deploying emissions-free renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power. In addition, facilities for these polluting energy sources (e.g., incinerators) are often sited in low-income areas, where their operations add to the inequities already borne by overburdened communities.

The provisions of Senate Bill 616 are responsive to Pope Francis's call to "integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" (p. 49). The bill removes from Tier 1 of the Maryland Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (REPS) polluting sources of energy: the incineration of municipal waste and refuse-derived fuel. These changes will increase the beneficial effect of Maryland's REPS to the environment and to all Marylanders.

Thank you for your consideration of our views and our respectful request for a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 616.

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