



Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home

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

Statement of Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home in Support of HB114 / SB199: the Transit Safety and Investment Act of 2021

March 19, 2020

Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home (MCCH) is a lay-led organization of Catholics from parishes in both the Archdiocese of Baltimore and the Archdiocese of Washington. 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 the three Roman Catholic (arch) dioceses serving Maryland: the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington.

As a grassroots organization of Maryland Catholics, MCCH would like to voice a strong endorsement of HB114 and SB199: the Transit Safety and Investment Act of 2021. We are pleased that the Maryland House of Delegates has passed HB114 and that it is now pending in the Senate.

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. This teaching and our belief place care for creation within the broader fabric of social justice. That comprehensive approach includes priority for the concerns of the poor and their communities—which are often overburdened with pollution and environmentally hazardous facilities.

We are pleased to note that the Transit Safety and Investment Act of 2021 embodies this broad moral vision. It requires that the Maryland Transit Authority's capital budget be at a level that allows it to address the critical needs that have been identified as necessary to get the system back into a state of good repair, so that it can operate safely and reliably. This funding will address the environmental and climate impacts of the transportation sector, which is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S. economy. It will also help the communities in Maryland that are particularly dependent on public transit for access to decent jobs, as well as to healthcare, education, and other essential destinations.

The bill's contribution to comprehensive action to address the climate crisis is consistent with Pope Francis's stated view that this crisis constitutes an emergency. Its focus on improving transportation used by Maryland's low-wealth communities and communities of color is an appropriate response to their needs for reliable transportation and to the disproportionate impacts of pollution and climate change on these communities.

For these reasons, MCCH congratulates the Maryland House of Delegates for having passed the bill and strongly urges favorable action by the Senate on it during the 2021 session of the General Assembly.