We, the Catholic individuals and organizations of this Encounter for Our Common Home, ask that you provide meaningful solutions to the climate crisis by passing legislation that significantly reduces greenhouse gas emissions and promotes human dignity through fair trade. We ask you to co-sponsor and support the Fostering Overseas Rule of Law and Environmentally Sound Trade (FOREST) Act to help our nation prevent global illegal deforestation. We ask that you consider your support for this bill beyond partisanship.

The earth’s resources are also being plundered because of short-sighted approaches to the economy, commerce and production. The loss of forests and woodlands entails the loss of species which may constitute extremely important resources in the future, not only for food but also for curing disease and other uses.

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’* 32

Senators from both parties recognize the grave threats of human-caused climate change, imperiling all peoples, our common home, and our shared future. We ask that you consider supporting this legislation through the lens of your faith and your legacy to your and our children, state, nation, world, and Creator.

*What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?*

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’* 160
READING THE “SIGNS OF THE TIMES”
The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s 2022 report reaffirmed that human-caused carbon emissions have driven global temperatures up over 1° Celsius since the 19th century. Sea levels rose eight inches during the 20th century, threatening the 40% of humans that live within 100km of a coast. An intensified water cycle increases frequency of extreme weather events. (UN study) The effects of climate change are felt by all, especially the most vulnerable. 1.4 billion people could be displaced by 2060 and 2 billion by 2100. (Cornell study) Climate change places undue pressure on developing economies with rich forested lands, leaving them susceptible to illegal deforestation.

CATHOLICISM AND CLIMATE CHANGE
Care for creation is a requirement of the Catholic faith, according to Saint John Paul II, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, Pope Francis, and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Pope Francis has raised the moral imperative for ambitious global action to mitigate the potentially catastrophic consequences of climate change and protect poor and vulnerable peoples and nations. We must take action now, grounded in both faith and reason, to mitigate climate change’s disastrous effects.

THE FOREST ACT PROMOTES FAIR TRADE
Global forests are essential for the health of all creatures. Since 1900, industrial forces have cut down nearly 20% of the world’s forests. (Data study) The FOREST Act seeks to bar imports of commercial products linked to illegal deforestation, including meat, soy, palm oil and cocoa. This builds on the Lacey Act, which already prohibits illegal timber and wildlife from entering the U.S. The bill also aligns with a law agreed to by the European Union in December 2022 that prevents companies from selling into the EU market coffee, beef, soy and other commodities linked to deforestation around the world. The U.S. should take steps to make sure that we don’t become a dumping ground for illegally sourced products and that we protect domestic agriculture from unfair practices elsewhere.

THE FOREST ACT PROTECTS THE MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLES
Catholic teaching instructs us to put the needs of our poor and vulnerable neighbors first. The harm of climate impacts fall upon them disproportionately, though they contribute least to the cause of climate change. Illegal deforestation also contributes to violence and other human rights abuses against Indigenous peoples defending their land and way of life. The FOREST Act would allow the U.S. to prosecute people and organizations driving illegal deforestation around the globe.

The sustainability of our long-term future requires a transition away from finite and polluting fossil fuel sources toward infinite and non-GHG emitting energy sources. The FOREST Act helps mitigate climate change by creating a fund to help countries transition away from deforestation and create more effective conservation and enforcement systems.

TOGETHER ON THE JOURNEY
The Catholic faith calls upon us to love both neighbor and adversary, and to uphold the life and dignity of every human person. We welcome opportunities to encounter you and others, building bridges across ideological differences. Thank you for meeting us. We hope and pray that you will join us in these efforts to care for the good of all people and our common home.

For more Information: Henry Glynn
Catholic Climate Covenant
henry@catholicclimatecovenant.org