

Support for HB 553

Environment and Transportation Committee

Dear Delegate Stewart:

I am Cindy, and I support House Bill 553, concerning the ban on coal tar sealants.

The coal tar industry claims that coal tar sealants have no correlation to cancer. However, the USEPA states that coal tar emulsion sealants can contain up to 35% refined coal tar, which is made up of 50% PAHs by mass, and PAHs are carcinogens and are known to be toxic to aquatic life.

The CEO of Seaboard Asphalt claimed that their company would lose 30% of their company since 30% was manufacturing coal tar. However, many people, and many seal coat application companies, have already stopped selling coal tar sealants. For example, in Howard County, 90% of the sealant application companies we had contacted had stopped using coal tar sealants prior to the ban in that county. This shows that coal tar-based sealants aren't always what the customer wants.

In the hearing, a scientist for a coal tar manufacturing company stated that coal tar can help the Chesapeake Bay. She said that PAHs are the building blocks of life, as they are hydrocarbons and thus are made of water and carbons. A quick Google search will show you that hydrocarbons are not actually a mix of water and carbon, but rather of hydrogen and carbon. While there is hydrogen in water, the two are very different. This shows that our opponents are extremely uninformed at best, misleading at worst. Also, PAHs actually harm the building blocks of life. Bottom-dwellers, the basis of the freshwater food chain, are being killed by PAHs, as stated previously in our presentation.

She also stated that coal tar coats the roadway for stormwater and sewage treatment, which would help slow down the deterioration of the infrastructures. However, our opponents are missing that even though coal tar may cover the infrastructure of the roads when the tires wear off the coal tar sealant and carry bits of their PAHs with them, as stated previously in the presentation. This will, eventually, wash up into the Chesapeake Bay, which will wreak havoc on its ecosystem.

In the hearing, our opponents also made claims saying that a ban on coal tar can have a negative impact on the environment and their business. They said coal tar helps reduce carbon emissions because coal tar lasts longer than other sealants. However, due to the extremely high levels of PAHs in coal tar, the asphalt sealant would have to wear off and be reapplied every day in order to reach the same potency as the coal tar sealant. Besides, just a few months ago, an industry member from New York affected by a county ban stated during a webinar that asphalt-based sealers can be just as effective as coal tar sealants if applied correctly.

For these reasons and more, coal tar sealants must be banned in Maryland to protect human life and the environment.

Signed,
Cindy Zhan
10202 Shirley Meadow Ct.
Ellicott City, MD 21042