



Committee: Environment and Transportation
Testimony on: HB0216 - Environment - Salt Applicator Certification Program - Establishment
Organization: Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing
Submitting: Laurie McGilvray, Co-Chair
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 8, 2023

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today. The Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of over 50 grassroots and professional organizations, urges you to vote favorable on HB216.

Salt, used extensively in the winter to treat icy roads, parking lots, and sidewalks, has been shown to have negative impacts on streams and drinking water. Runoff of excess salt runs directly into streams and rivers, affecting the aquatic animals and plants that live there. Freshwater animals are not adapted to salty conditions as are their coastal relatives.

Excess salt also affects drinking water by running directly off surfaces into nearby lakes and reservoirs. In addition, it can percolate into groundwater, affecting the drinking water of people who get their water from wells. Once salt is in the groundwater, it can remain for along time, making it very difficult to remove from drinking water.

Currently, public contractors who treat roadways, parking lots, and sidewalks, must be trained on how much salt to apply to prevent over-application. However, there is not enough oversight of private contractors. HB216 will require the Department of the Environment to establish a Salt Applicator Certification Program to encourage efficient winter maintenance of roadways, parking lots, and sidewalks through the proper application of salt or salt alternatives. Each commercial applicator must participate in the program and maintain a valid certificate. The bill includes exceptions for state or local government employees, owners of owner-occupied residential properties, or landlords or tenants of a single-unit residential rental properties. Using salt alternatives and not applying too much salt, are effective ways to keep roadways safe, while also reducing excess salt in lakes, streams, reservoirs, and wells. A certification program will ensure proper application of salt or salt alternatives.

We support HB216 and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.