



**HB 553 - Environment - Sale and Application of Coal Tar Pavement Products - Prohibition**

House Environment and Transportation Committee

February 26, 2020

**Position: Favorable**

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee,

Clean Water Action supports HB553 to ban the use and sale of coal tar containing pavement products.

Coal-tar based sealant is a major source of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH) contamination in urban environments, according to studies conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey. Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons are suspected human carcinogens and are toxic to aquatic life. They are linked to cancer, mutations, and birth defects. Some PAHs are more toxic when exposed to sunlight, which is the exact condition coal-tar-based sealants are exposed.

PAHs are present in various products, but coal-tar-based sealants have far higher concentrations of PAHs than other products:

- Asphalt: 2-9 mg/kg
- Tire particles: 84 mg/kg
- Used motor oil: 730 mg/kg
- Coal-tar-based sealcoat: 34,000 to 202,000 mg/kg<sup>1</sup>

Fortunately, coal-tar sealants are not needed, alternatives without coal-tar are widely available. Many jurisdictions, including Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's Counties, have banned sealants containing coal-tar. These other products do not pose the risk and are cost-effective. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.

Thank you,

Emily Ranson  
Clean Water Action  
[eranson@cleanwater.org](mailto:eranson@cleanwater.org)  
443-562-2832

---

1

[https://www.usgs.gov/mission-areas/water-resources/science/coal-tar-based-pavement-sealcoat-pahs-and-environmental-health?qt-science\\_center\\_objects=0#qt-science\\_center\\_objects](https://www.usgs.gov/mission-areas/water-resources/science/coal-tar-based-pavement-sealcoat-pahs-and-environmental-health?qt-science_center_objects=0#qt-science_center_objects)