

HB1193 - Coal Combustion By-Products

Hearing Date: Thursday, March 7, 2024

In Tantallon and communities across the state, we have witnessed firsthand the devastating

Position: FAVORABLE (with sponsor amendments)

Comments by Herbert H. Jones III – Member of the South County Environmental Justice Coalition

Before the Economic Matters Committee:- Chaired by the Honorable Delegate C.T.Wilson

Good afternoon, Chairman Wilson, Committee Members –my name is Herbert H. Jones III, founding member of the South County Environmental Justice Coalition and the president of the Tantallon North Area Civic Association in Prince George's County, Maryland. We represent over 1800 homeowners in the area. I am here today to urge a favorable report for HB1193 - Coal Combustion By-Products as amended by the sponsor. This bill is critical for the health and well-being of communities like mine that have been adversely impacted by the toxic legacy of coal ash along with a history of environmental injustices.

Our community has been saddled with the burden of having to deal with the aftermath of burning coal, a practice that has left behind millions of tons of coal ash containing hazardous pollutants. These pollutants, including arsenic, lead, mercury, and others, pose serious risks to public health, causing cancer, heart diseases, reproductive issues, and neurological harm. The situation is dire, with coal ash contaminating groundwater, surface waterways, and even the air we breathe, not to mention the impact on our housing values and environmental/health effects of coal ash pollution. Our drinking water sources have been compromised, our health has been put at risk, and our environment has been degraded. The time for action is now.

HB1193 presents a comprehensive approach to addressing the coal ash crisis. By requiring assessments of groundwater and surface water contamination, prioritizing safe storage and disposal of coal ash, establishing regulatory fees, and ensuring community input in remediation plans, this bill lays the groundwork for meaningful change. Additionally, the advisory council's role to include impacted community members ensures that those most affected have a stake in the cleanup process.

It is imperative that Maryland acts swiftly to confront this environmental injustice. The EPA's 2015 Coal Ash Rule has proven insufficient, with widespread violations and continued contamination. State intervention is necessary to protect the health and rights of Maryland residents.

I urge this committee to consider the urgency of the situation and to support HB1193. By doing so, you will not only safeguard the health of communities like mine but also uphold principles of environmental justice and accountability.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Herbert H. Jones III

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