

SB0882 - SUPPORT
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SUPPORT: SB0882- Coal Transportation Fee and Fossil Fuel Mitigation Fund (Coal Dust Cleanup and Asthma Remediation Act)

Chair Feldman and Members of the Committees:

Coal traveling through Maryland creates significant air pollution, affecting the health of residents living along transport routes. Additionally, the burning of coal creates greenhouse gas emissions and is contrary to fighting climate change. This bill, Coal Dust Cleanup and Asthma Mitigation Fund, creates a dedicated funding stream to address these impacts while supporting communities most affected by coal pollution. This bill will bring in needed revenue, but I want to address the importance of coal dust on these communities.

I'm a retired physician who specialized in diseases caused by work and treated many people with lung disease caused by airborne dust, such as coal dust. I've also worked with a number of communities impacted by hazardous chemicals being released in their neighborhoods. My knowledge and experience tell me that communities exposed to coal dust on a regular basis will have detrimental health impacts. Twenty years ago, research from Harvard, The "Six Cities" study, was a major epidemiological study of over 8,000 adults in six American cities that helped to establish the connection between fine-particulate air pollution (as can come from coal dust) and reduced life expectancy. Research since has refined our knowledge and confirmed these findings again and again. More specific studies (including from University of California - Davis and the Johns Hopkins University) have shown a dramatic increase in respiratory ailments in communities along the coal route. While this is especially true in Baltimore City, which has one of the highest asthma rates in the country, the impact of coal dust can be felt in communities along the coal route, including Frostburg, Hagerstown and other Western Maryland communities.

In a perfect world, we would no longer be mining or exporting coal. Our world is less than perfect, so this bill is a great step toward helping impacted communities. I urge a favorable vote on this bill.