



February 27, 2025

SUPPORT SB 882 - Coal Dust Clean Up and Asthma Mitigation Fund
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to support SB 882, The Coal Dust Clean Up and Asthma Mitigation Fund. We support the approach in SB 882 to generate much-needed funding for climate solutions, assessing a modest fee on coal transported into the state. This approach replicates an existing fee for oil maintained by the Maryland Department of the Environment. The estimated revenue for the state is estimated to surpass \$250 million annually and be deposited into a newly created "Fossil Fuel Mitigation Fund." This significant revenue source takes an important step in ensuring that Maryland is able to achieve its climate goals and continue to set the standard nationally on climate policy.

Additionally, this legislation directly supports communities most harmed by the pollution left behind by the coal transportation through the state. The impact of coal dust can be felt especially severely in Baltimore City, as well as communities along the coal route, including Frostburg, Hagerstown and other Western Maryland communities. Coal dust contains the air pollutant, particulate matter (PM). PM is classified by regulatory agencies based on the size of the particles, with the smaller particles like PM_{2.5} (particles measuring 2.5 micrometers or less) being more dangerous because they can penetrate someone's lungs more deeply if inhaled. A University of California, Davis [study](#) of a coal terminal and nearby rail holding yard in the city of Richmond, CA found that the storage of coal and coal cars at the rail yard significantly increased ambient concentrations of PM_{2.5}. "Terminal operations involving coal transport, storage, and handling significantly increase community exposure to ambient PM_{2.5}. These PM_{2.5} increments subsequently increase the risk of a wide range of adverse health effects with environmental justice implications."

PM_{2.5} is one of the world's leading causes of mortality, accounting for over [4 million](#), or 62%, of the global total estimated 6.7 million premature deaths from air pollution annually. The most vulnerable populations to adverse impacts from air pollution exposure include young children, older adults, those with chronic illnesses, communities of color, and economically disadvantaged communities.

Long term exposure to PM_{2.5} is [associated with](#) premature death from all causes, as well as from cardiovascular, respiratory disease and lung cancer. There is also strong evidence that PM_{2.5} can [cause cardiovascular disease](#). Other specific conditions [associated](#) with PM_{2.5} include coronary artery disease, hypertension, diabetes, respiratory infections, chronic lung disease, preterm births, new onset asthma, impaired lung development in children, pneumonia incidence, increased preterm birth, low birth weight, Alzheimer, and Parkinson's. Short term exposures are associated with exacerbations of asthma and chronic lung disease, emergency department visits, and strokes.



The fund established by this bill ensures that at least 40% of the funding raised by this bill are directed to support the overburdened and underserved communities impacted by this pollution, with additional resources directed to support asthma treatment programs.

In December 2023, the Maryland Department of the Environment released the Climate Pollution Reduction Plan (Climate Plan), and identified the state would need to invest \$1 billion annually to achieve the state's greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. This investment is expected to yield up to \$321 million in additional health benefits in 2031 compared to current policies. SB882 implements one of the recommendations specified in the plan as a solution to help fund this plan - a "Hazardous Substance Fee" that would be paid into the Strategic Energy Investment Fund to fund the investments outlined in the Climate Plan.

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About Healthy Climate Maryland

United by a shared commitment to the health and well-being of all Marylanders, Healthy Climate Maryland is a coalition of dedicated public health and medical professionals that seeks to address climate change and environmental challenges by focusing on their impacts on public health. We are working to educate, advocate, and build strong partnerships towards a healthier, more sustainable future for Maryland.

About the Maryland Public Health Association

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is one of the oldest and most vibrant state affiliates of the American Public Health Association (APHA) and Maryland's leading professional organization for those working in the field of public health. MdPHA remains dedicated to increasing health equity for Marylanders through advocacy and community collaborations. We are committed to engaging the public health community in networking and educational events, advocacy activities and in emerging issues affecting the health of Marylanders.