

Committee:	Education, Energy and the Environment
Testimony on:	SB882 Coal Dust Clean Up and Asthma Mitigation Fund
Submitted by:	Deborah A. Cohn
Position:	Favorable with Amendment
Hearing Date:	February 27, 2025

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing my testimony today in support of SB882, the Coal Dust Clean UP and Asthma Mitigation Fund.

Maryland currently charges an 8-cent per barrel fee for oil transport through our state, allocating the revenues to address damage from oil spills. SB882 creates a similar fee (\$13.00 per short ton) on coal transported in Maryland. The fee would be used to address the health and climate change impacts of coal transport through Maryland. **While this is an important beginning, I suggest the Committee consider amending the bill to provide an automatic escalating fee structure so that the fees do not get badly outdated.**

Coal Dust Adversely Impacts Health: Coal dust from surface transportation of coal can significantly impact health, primarily by causing or aggravating various respiratory conditions including asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases such as emphysema and chronic bronchitis.¹

Climate Change Costs and Threats to Maryland: Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the combustion of coal exacerbates climate change. Climate change is a world-wide existential threat. Maryland is not immune. We have already spent \$228 million for flood prevention in Ellicott City, \$84 million for tidal protection in Annapolis, and \$950,000 annually for stormwater infrastructure in St. Mary's County.

Estimates indicate that SB882 would provide approximately \$300 million per year to address the health and climate change damage caused by combustion of coal. It would provide an estimated \$5 million annually for asthma treatment programs targeting residents living along coal transport routes. The revenues would also be used to increase home energy efficiency and electrification, reduce GHG emissions from commercial buildings, including multifamily housing, and supporting and facilitating use of electric vehicles, school buses, charging equipment and mass transit, with 40 percent of revenues being used to support those communities most burdened by coal transport. **Critically, it brings in immediate resources in a tight budget year.**

For these reasons I respectfully request careful consideration of the proposed amendment and in any event, a favorable report on SB882.

¹ Ostro, et al, "Health impact assessment of PM2.5 from uncovered coal trains in the San Francisco Bay Area: Implications for global exposures," Environmental Research (July 1, 2024)
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0013935124006911>