

Committee: Environment and Transportation
Testimony on: HB1088 - Coal Dust Clean Up and
Asthma Mitigation Fund
Submitting: Dave Arndt
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: March 11, 2025

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for reading my testimony today in support of HB1088. I urge you to vote favorably on HB1088.

Before I get into bill specifics, here are some facts about coal.

Coal is transported from mostly from West Virginia by train with open coal cars to the port of Baltimore where it sits on large piles awaiting to be shipped to foreign ports to be burned for industrial processes and energy generation. The Maryland coal operations are highly automated, from train operations to unloading train cars onto piles, to loading coal onto a ship. Most days, there is at most 20 people involved in this process in Baltimore daily.

Coal dust contains at least 17 toxic heavy metals and pollutants including lead, mercury, cadmium, chromium, arsenic and selenium, all of which can endanger human health, and at least six neurotoxins and five known or suspected carcinogens. Research shows that prolonged exposure to coal dust via air or water can affect every major organ system in the human body, causing birth defects, heart and lung disease, and a variety of cancers. Coal dust pollution has also caused fish kills and deformities in aquatic life. New research by [Johns Hopkins](#) has shown that the coal dust from these piles travel for miles and is being breathed in by local Curtis Bay residence and by people that live within miles of the rail lines where the coal is transported on. It is no wonder that the life expectancy in Curtis Bay is 15 years less than other communities in Baltimore.

The burning of coal is one of the leading causes of climate change. Since climate effects are not local, burning coal in India will ultimately affect our climate. Maryland is spending millions of dollars each year on climate mitigation activities, this includes the cost of damage to infrastructure, property, agriculture, and human health. This cost is expected to increase over time as the impacts of climate change become more severe.

Coal use is on a steep decline, the question is not if coal use will be replaced by other energy generating sources, the question is when. This has two effects. First, no company is investing in new coal export terminals, so exporters will be using their export terminal until demand is diminishing enough to close their operation. A recent independent study conducted specifically for HB1088 has confirmed this, the current coal exporters will not be shifting their operation out of state for the foreseeable future.

Secondly, the coal ports are a highly valued port property directly connected to a rail line. People of vision should be working on which companies can we bring in to replace the coal terminals, it really could be thousands of jobs and CSX still could get paid for rail service.

Coal is dead and we all know it; we need to proactively move forward. This could be an import and assembly hub for heat pumps.

Maryland receives about ~\$5million a year in port maintenance(dredging) through the Corp of Engineering for shipping out coal. Since we have already determined that this bill will not decrease the amount of coal being shipped out of Maryland, the port of Maryland will not be affected by this bill. However, as previously noted, coal is dying and we need to proactively plan for port maintenance funding in the future. Baltimore is a preferred port for imports and exports, let's start working now on replacement tenants for these properties.

HB1088 creates a new fund that addresses the impact of coal transport on our communities and climate. It is estimated that HB1088 would bring in approximately \$300 million per year for climate programs.

The benefits of HB1088 are clear:

- We are in a climate crisis and this bill encourages cleaner transportation methods and reduced reliance on fossil fuels.
- This bill is a pivotal step towards Maryland's ambitious clean energy targets by ensuring a fair contribution from fossil fuel transport to the state's environmental and clean energy funds.
- Fighting climate change and mitigating the effects of climate change are expensive propositions and are especially difficult when Maryland has a constrained budget. This bill provides additional funding which can further our leadership in climate solutions, support equitable energy access, and protect our natural resources for future generations.
- It directs 40% of revenue to support overburdened and underserved communities affected by coal transport.
- It provides \$5 million annually for asthma treatment programs targeting residents living along coal transport routes.

For all of these reasons, I strongly support HB1088 and urge a **FAVORABLE** report in Committee.

Thank you,

Dave Arndt
Co-Chair – Maryland Legislation Coalition – Climate Justice Wing