

**Testimony Supporting HB1088**  
**House Environment and Transportation Committee**  
**March 11, 2025**

**Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

We write as private citizens and residents of Baltimore, Maryland to provide information that is relevant and supportive of HB1088, Coal Transportation Fee and Fossil Fuel Mitigation Fund (Coal Dust Cleanup and Asthma Remediation Act). Dr. Heaney is Associate Professor of Environmental Health and Engineering (EHE), Epidemiology (EPI) and International Health (IH), co-leader of the Community Engagement Core (CEC) of the Center for Community Health: Addressing Regional Maryland Environmental Determinants of Disease (CHARMED), Director of the Community Science and Innovation for Environmental Justice (CSI EJ) Initiative, Director of the Occupational Epidemiology and Biomarkers Program of the Johns Hopkins NIOSH Education and Research Center, and Co-Chair of the Environmental Justice and Community Partnerships (EJCP) Committee of the Sustainability Leadership Council (SLC) at Johns Hopkins University (JHU). Mr. Aubourg is a Research Associate of EHE, a co-leader in the CSI EJ Initiative, the community engagement coordinator in the CEC of the CHARMED Center, and a committee member of the EJCP and K-12 Sustainability Education committees of the SLC at JHU. Mr. Aubourg is also an unpaid member of the board of directors of the South Baltimore Community Land Trust (SBCLT). We lead research addressing community-identified environmental health and justice concerns in Maryland related to the cumulative burdens of air, land, and water pollution, including concerns with exposure to coal dust in South Baltimore's Curtis Bay community.

***Addressing Community Health Concerns of Coal Dust Exposure and Cumulative Air Pollution Burden in South Baltimore, Maryland***

For years, community members in Curtis Bay have raised nuisance, health, and quality of life concerns regarding routine operations at the open-air CSX coal terminal, and their experiences with the accumulation of dark, black dust on and in their homes and neighborhood. Following an explosion at the CSX coal terminal on December 30, 2021<sup>1-3</sup>, the Community of Curtis Bay Association (CCBA) and South Baltimore Community Land Trust (SBCLT) initiated a community-driven research collaboration between scientists at Johns Hopkins University, University of Maryland, College Park, University of California at Davis, and the Maryland Department of the Environment to improve understanding of the potential impacts of the coal terminal's routine operating activities on changes in air pollution burden in Curtis Bay. Our research provides information about the consistency and coherence of the scientific evidence – across varied analytic and observational platforms – with community lived experience with black dust accumulation, which residents attribute to coal dust. Key findings of analytic outcomes are summarized as follows:

- Aubourg et al., 2024 in *Science of the Total Environment* (PMID: 39396779, DOI: [10.1016/j.scitotenv.2024.176842](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2024.176842)) confirmed the presence of coal dust in the Curtis Bay community at two residential locations—~1100 feet and ~3/4 of a mile from the coal

terminal. Passive settled dust was sampled for a 3-day period near residents' homes and the local high school.

- Preliminary multi-pollutant air sensors research, currently under peer review, that identified greater particulate matter (PM) of aerodynamic diameter  $\leq 1 \mu\text{m}$  (PM<sub>1</sub>), PM<sub>2.5</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub>, total suspended particles (TSP), and black carbon air pollution burden in the Curtis Bay community when downwind of the coal terminal and any bulldozer activity was visible at the coal terminal, and highest air pollution burden when both occurred jointly (both downwind and with visible bulldozer activity).

Further, we have partnered with the SBCLT, CCBA, the South Baltimore 7 (SB7) Coalition, scientists at the University of Maryland, College Park, and scientists at the Maryland Department of the Environment to provide scientific and technical support that addresses community-identified concerns with environmental pollution from roughly 70 facilities regulated by air pollutant permits from the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE).<sup>4-6</sup> These include a coal export terminal, solid waste incinerator, medical waste incinerator, wastewater treatment plant, municipal landfill, chemical manufacturing plant, oil and gas facilities, among others. The operating permits of these facilities are regulated individually rather than through a framework of their cumulative impacts that acknowledges the existing burden on community members.

Our scientific and technical investigations with SBCLT have provided critical answers to community concerns about the presence of coal dust in their neighborhood<sup>4</sup>, adverse impacts of diesel truck traffic on black carbon air pollution<sup>6</sup>, the frequency of visible black smoke emissions from industrial fires<sup>5</sup> and the Curtis Bay medical waste incinerator, and overall community air pollution burden. Additionally, South Baltimore residents in partnership with members of the JHU community have documented several decades of industrial explosions, leaks, spills, and other disasters impacting quality of life and mental health in the area.<sup>7</sup> However, our efforts address the tip of the iceberg among the 70 facilities permitted to emit air pollutants in the community.

The adoption of HB1088, the Coal Transportation Fee and Fossil Fuel Mitigation Fund (Coal Dust Cleanup and Asthma Remediation Act), would help address the existing environmental pollution burden in South Baltimore related to the presence of coal dust. We will continue to partner with South Baltimore communities to provide scientific and technical responses to the reality of their daily lived experiences with the disproportionate and adverse impacts of coal dust exposure.

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## **References**

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