

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: HB 1088 – Coal Clean-Up and Asthma Mitigation Fund

Submitting: Marta Orellana

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: March 11, 2025

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Marta Orellana, and I have lived in Baltimore City's District 46 for the past 16 years. I am a mother of two wonderful children, one of whom faces the daily challenges of both asthma and autism. As a family, we have experienced firsthand the devastating health impacts of coal pollution. We live just 2.3 miles from the coal terminal in Baltimore, and the consequences of this proximity are impossible to ignore.

I am also an Environmental Justice *Promotora* with CHISPA Maryland, a program of the Maryland League of Conservation Voters. In this role, I engage my community on issues like climate change and environmental health—issues that directly affect our children's well-being.

Every day, coal transport operations coat our neighborhoods in toxic dust, infiltrating our homes and polluting the air we breathe. We cannot escape it—it settles on our windowsills, in our yards, and, most dangerously, in our lungs. For my son, who already battles asthma, this pollution is not just an inconvenience; it is a direct and constant threat to his health. There are days when he struggles to breathe, nights when his wheezing keeps him awake, and moments when I have had to rush him to the hospital due to severe asthma attacks. No parent should have to watch their child suffer simply because of the air they are forced to breathe.

For too long, communities like mine have been overlooked, forced to bear the burden of environmental pollution while decision-makers fail to act. The harmful effects of coal dust are well-documented, yet little has been done to protect the health of families living near these industrial sites. This is not just about policies or statistics—it's about real people, real children, and real suffering.

The **Coal Clean-Up and Asthma Mitigation Fund (HB 1088)** is a crucial step toward addressing this public health crisis. It will provide much-needed resources to clean up existing pollution and invest in solutions that protect families from further harm. We must break the cycle of environmental injustice that has plagued our communities for generations.

I urge you to vote in favor of HB 1088 and take a stand for the health and well-being of families like mine. Clean air is not a privilege—it is a fundamental right. Our children deserve to grow up in an environment where they can breathe freely, without fear of lifelong health consequences.

Thank you for your time and consideration.