

Testimony in Support of HB902 – The Coal Ash Bill

Presented by Jason Litten

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Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB902. My name is Jason Litten, and I am the Co-Director of the Western Maryland Regional GIS Center at Frostburg State University. For years, I have researched the number, location, history, and characteristics of coal ash disposal sites across the Chesapeake Bay watershed, particularly in Maryland.

Maryland has approximately **70 known coal ash disposal sites**, ranging from large landfills containing millions of tons to smaller sites where coal ash was used as structural fill. Many of these sites are unlined and near water bodies, posing significant risks to groundwater, surface water, and public health. The **EPA's 2024 regulations closed a long-standing gap** by finally addressing legacy disposal sites, including numerous sites in Maryland that will now require monitoring and cleanup. However, history has shown that **federal regulations on coal ash can be delayed, weakened, or reversed**, making **state-level action essential** to ensure long-term oversight and protection.

HB902 will **ensure Maryland remains proactive** in regulating coal ash sites, even if federal policies shift. It will **strengthen monitoring and cleanup efforts**, increase oversight funding, and support **beneficial re-use** where safe and feasible. Properly processed coal ash can be repurposed in cement and construction materials, reducing the demand for virgin materials while preventing long-term environmental harm. Where removal is impractical, **strong containment and monitoring** must be required.

This bill is **a win for both industry and the environment**. It provides a pathway for coal ash to be **safely reused in products like cement**, reducing landfill waste while lowering costs for businesses. At the same time, it **protects Maryland's waterways and communities from toxic contamination**, ensuring a cleaner, safer future. **With responsible oversight, we can turn an industrial waste problem into an opportunity for innovation and economic benefit.**

Without action, these disposal sites can continue to leach **toxic metals like arsenic, lead, and selenium** into our waterways. **This bill ensures that the communities affected by coal ash contamination have a voice** in cleanup decisions, and that **the responsibility of oversight falls on industry—not the public.**

I urge the committee to support HB902 and take this crucial step toward **protecting Maryland's water resources, public health, and environmental future.**

Thank you.