

Support for SB 730
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

Dear Senator Lam,

Coal tar is a horrible substance put on driveways, parking lots, and roads to improve their appearance. Varying levels of exposure to PAHs from sealants are toxic to human and aquatic health, acutely toxic to fathead minnows and water fleas, and may be linked to tumors in brown bullhead catfish in the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers. Fish embryos that are exposed to low amounts of PAHs can develop eyes with shorter retinas and smaller lenses, misshaped hearts, and abnormal heartbeats. Wind, runoff, and especially snow plows, can move PAH-contaminated pavement dust into nearby soil. PAH concentrations in soil can range from 2.3 to 14 times higher in soils adjacent to sealcoated pavement than unsealed pavement. Elevated levels of PAHs can be found for up to three years after the sealcoat is applied. A 2013 Minnesota Pollution Control Agency sediment study found that coal-tar sealants contributed 67% of total PAHs in 15 metro-area stormwater ponds. High concentrations of PAHs have accumulated in some stormwater pond sediments around the state. Research conducted by these agencies show that coal tar-based sealants are a significant source of PAHs to urban waterways. Cities must maintain stormwater ponds by dredging them, and if the PAH concentrations in the dredged material are high enough, disposal can be very costly, in the hundreds of millions of dollars statewide. Studies have shown that the decrease in the use of coal tar products will reduce the cleanup costs.

For these reasons and many more, coal tar sealants must be banned in Maryland to ensure environmental health.

Signed,

Jennifer Littlefield

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