

Support for HB 553
Environment and Transportation Committee

Dear Delegate Stewart:

Being a citizen in Maryland gives us many rights, including the right to be healthy. Coal tar is dangerous to human health, and everyone deserves to stay away from coal tar and live a long and healthy life. For these reasons, my team and I support and advocate for House Bill 553.

In an article from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Nick Kelso, owner of Minnesota-based Jet-Black International, said his seal-coating company stopped using coal tar sealants in 2012. He now uses asphalt-based sealers, which he said aren't as odorous after application and don't burn a worker's skin upon contact. He said that they are not seeing much of a difference in performance.

On February 20, 2019, there was a hearing held to determine whether or not to ban coal tar in Maryland. In this hearing, opponents made multiple claims against a ban on coal tar. They testified that coal tar is considered safe for workers, has minimal to no health effects, and is classified as safe and effective by the Food and Drug Administration. However, throughout our research, we found that coal tar is fatal to humans and aquatic life and can cause skin, lung, kidney, bladder, and stomach cancers.

They also testified that coal tar is utilized in numerous household products like shampoo and soap, and are used in treatments for many common skin conditions, directly on the skin. However, Health Canada says that coal tar dye, found inside many of these products, is no longer made from coal tar and is rather made synthetically, as coal tar in the dye was proven to be unsafe for the body.

One of the opponents at the hearing stated that the only alternative for coal tar was epoxy seal coaters, and they are 4 times more expensive than coal tar. However, in our research, we found that there are many other alternatives to coal tar, like asphalt-based sealants and latex-based sealants.

Maryland legislators must ban dangerous coal tar sealants to protect our citizens and the environment.

Signed,
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