



March 24, 2021

House Bill 077

Environment – Application of Coal Tar Pavement Products – Prohibitions
(Safer Sealant Act of 2021)

Senate Environment, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Anne Arundel County joined other Maryland counties in banning¹ the sale and use of coal tar pavement products in 2015 for the very same reasons that this bill is being heard today. These products are a known source of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) which pose significant health risks to human and aquatic life.

According to a 2016 report by the USGS², PAHs wear down into small particles that can be tracked into homes on the soles of shoes and can become part of the home's airborne dust. Exposure to PAHs has been linked to an increased risk of lung, skin, bladder and respiratory cancers in humans, with children being especially vulnerable to exposure and health risks.

PAHs are also present in stormwater runoff from pavement that has been sealed with coal tar products. This runoff enters our waterways for months following application to a surface, and has been shown to be significantly toxic to aquatic life. Once in the water, these PAHs can become incorporated into bottom sediments posing a long-term risk to fishing resources in our rivers and the Chesapeake Bay.³

Finally, as many counties across Maryland have already demonstrated, risks from coal tar pavement products are entirely avoidable. Anne Arundel County has published a non-exhaustive list of fifteen alternative pavement sealant products⁴ that do not contain coal, and thus pose far less risk to human health and the environment.

For all these reasons, Anne Arundel County urges a favorable vote on HB 077.

¹ Anne Arundel County. 2015. Bill No. 104-15: Stormwater Management – Coal Tar Pavement Products – Prohibition. <https://www.aacounty.org/departments/county-council/legislation/bills-and-resolutions/FF583A00F99A4A41F59F476736E2375B.pdf>.

² USGS. 2016. Coal-tar-based pavement sealcoat – Potential concerns for human health and aquatic life. <https://pubs.er.usgs.gov/publication/fs20163017>.

³ Chesapeake Bay Program. 2012. Technical Report: Toxic Contaminants in the Chesapeake Bay and its Watershed. https://federalleadership.chesapeakebay.net/ChesBayToxics_finaldraft_11513b.pdf.

⁴ Anne Arundel County. 2016. Coal Tar Free Alternative Products List. <https://www.aacounty.org/departments/inspections-and-permits/site-inspections/coal-tar-pavement-ban/>.