

Testimony for Informational Hearing on CSX Coal Pier Explosion on June 15, 2022

I'm Michelle Rockwell of Coal Kills Baltimore, a new environmental justice campaign for Baltimore. Thank you for holding this hearing. Our primary concern is the lack of city and state government transparency about the the CSX explosion to the residents of Curtis Bay and the city at large.

The Maryland Department of the Environment holds ultimate regulatory authority over operation at the coal piers. So, MDE should be represented at these hearings. Their absence reflects the MDE's questionable and opaque oversight as well as the City Council's powerlessness to compel accountability from a state authority.

The MDE has a long track record of abdicating its compliance oversight of the coal piers to CSX managers. It also has repeatedly failed to engage in good faith with Curtis Bay residents. There are people living with the nightmare of having coal dust blowing daily into their homes.

MDE compliance inspections are not easily accessed by the public. There have been at least 25 since the explosion. They must be made easily accessible and should be shared with the community.

Coal Kills Baltimore wants the state to take the lead on the explosion away from CSX and concentrate on environmental impacts. Focussing compliance exclusively on workplace safety only permits MDE to turn a blind eye to the degraded water and air quality in the Curtis Bay Community.

The City Council must step up. More than five months after the explosion, elected officials have done little to update constituents in Curtis Bay and the city at large. The city council must engage directly with the citizens of Curtis Bay to build political power to pressure MDE and those above them to take control of compliance. These coal piers no longer belong in this city. It is hazardous for Curtis Bay, Baltimore and the entire world.

CSX is charged with monitoring the air quality - this is unacceptable.

CSX gets to choose "appropriate preventative actions" for the future - this is also unacceptable.

The MDE - not CSX should be responsible for air monitoring and determining appropriate preventative actions.

MDE must be compelled to participate in all hearings and actions related to the CSX coal pier explosions in the future. That's where the power lies.