



Legislation Text

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Introductory*

City of Baltimore Council Bill R (Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Porter

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning **Informational Hearing - CSX Coal Silo Explosion**

For the purpose of inviting representatives from the CSX Transportation, Inc., incorporated under the general law of the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Baltimore Fire Department, and the Office of Emergency Management to investigate the cause of the CSX Coal Silo explosion that occurred on December 30, 2021, in Curtis Bay, to address what is being done about air quality in the area, and how an incident of this type may be prevented in the future.

On December 30, 2021, a loud explosion at the Curtis Bay Coal Piers operated by CSX Transportation, Inc. shook the homes in Curtis Bay. Luckily no person was immediately injured and damage was limited to the homes of Curtis Bay residents and commercial properties. What is not know is are the long-term health implications of the explosion. Debris, coal dust, smoke, and other materials were launched into the air that day. Exposure to the resulting poor air quality may have a lasting impact on Curtis Bay residents.

The CSX operated Curtis Bay Coal Piers is the second largest exporter of coal on the East Coast. The coal terminal supports coal and iron ore movements on and off the international and domestic waterway systems. There are inherent hazards in handling and transporting coal. The build up of highly combustible coal dust on machinery lead to the explosion on December 30th. As natural byproduct of the industry, these hazards have the potential to echo beyond the CSX facility and into the community of Curtis Bay, and among its residents and businesses.

According to a 2016 study by the Environmental Integrity Project, Curtis Bay ranks first in Maryland for emissions of air toxins from stationary sources - including coal plants. From 2005 to 2009 Curtis Bay ranked among the top ten zip codes in the United States for air toxins released, and number one from stationary sources. Curtis Bay is already burdened by significant inequitable environmental conditions. The explosion on December 30th leave the residents of Curtis Bay increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of poor air quality caused by concentrated coal particulate in the air.

With this investigative hearing the City Council seeks to better understand:

1. how and why the explosion happened;

2. how CSX is addressing environmental concerns in Curtis Bay as related to the coal piers' close proximity to residents; and
3. how air quality is affected by the operation of the coal piers, and more specifically how the December 30th explosion impacted air quality measures.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, That inviting Baltimore City Council invites representatives from the CSX Transportation, Inc., incorporated under the general law of the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Baltimore Fire Department, and the Office of Emergency Management to investigate the cause of the CSX Coal Silo explosion that occurred on December 30, 2021, in Curtis Bay, to address what is being done about air quality in the area, and how an incident of this type may be prevented in the future.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Director of State Relations for CSX Transportation, Inc., the Chief of the Baltimore Fire Department, the Emergency Manager of the Office of Emergency Management, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the Baltimore City Council.