

February 19, 2020

Maryland General Assembly
Economic Matters Committee, Room 230
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Written Testimony in opposition of House Bill No. 1547:

Submitted by:
Troy Wilson
Vice President
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Dear Chair Davis, Vice-Chair Dumais and Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

My name is Troy Wilson, and on behalf of Reclaimed Rubber and Plastics (RRP), I am writing in opposition to House Bill No. 1547. In addition to removing synthetic turf playing surfaces, RRP operates a repurposing/recycling facility in Pennsylvania. RRP currently repurposes/recycles more than 90 percent of the synthetic turf and infill that is delivered to its facility. Based on our ongoing research and development, we anticipate that number will increase to 98 percent. Our company has grown from 4 employees four years ago to 25 today, and we expect that number to double within the next two years. Our company is unique in the industry and we present an alternative to disposing of used synthetic turf in landfills. The vast number of fields being replaced just this year will generate more than tens of thousands of tons of material that, absent recycling such as ours, will end up in landfills.

Requiring a producer of synthetic turf and turf infill to submit an extended producer responsibility stewardship plan to the Maryland Department of the Environment for review and approval would negatively impact the synthetic turf owner, environment, player safety and the rapidly advancing industry recycling technology. End users are the owners of the synthetic turf, not the manufacturers. By requiring the end user to give up possession of the synthetic turf through this stewardship program, you are taking away something of value to them and their right to choose recycling over landfilling.

We are focused on recycling and reuse, and synthetic turf in current fields already includes reclaimed and recycled materials. RRP is developing reuse and recycling options for synthetic turf that has reached the next stage of its useful life. We are reclaiming and repurposing sand, crumb rubber and other alternative infills for use in new synthetic fields, landscaping, asphalt roads, golf courses and agricultural applications. RRP is exploring the use of reclaimed turf in the production of plastic lumber and plastic pellets for injection molding.

Because of ongoing research and development, the recycling of synthetic turf and infill will provide end-of-useful life options in Maryland in the near future that do not exist today—**“green” options that do not rely on landfilling material.** We believe that research and development of recycling processes and markets needs to continue: House Bill No. 1547 stifles growth in this arena.

A producer cannot know today, what additional recycling options will exist in 8 to 10 years for addressing the disposition of synthetic turf at the end of its useful life. Consequently, many manufacturers of turf will not see Maryland as a viable market.

For the industry In general, mandating an extended producer responsibility program would have many negative consequences for Maryland, including:

- *Negative Environmental Impact:* By mandating this program with additional costs for synthetic turf, the use of synthetic turf in Maryland will decline, which will increase water consumption and CO2 emissions, and the use of harmful lawn chemicals. One typical grass sports field uses between 500,000 to one million gallons of water each year. Furthermore, the use of synthetic turf decreases harmful CO2 emissions by eliminating the use of gas-powered lawn care equipment. Also, synthetic turf does not require harmful lawn chemicals in order to maintain a healthy and safe surface. Lawn chemicals are the fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides used in lawn care and that eventually pollute our water supplies.
- *Increased Costs for Local Municipalities:* A stewardship program would increase the costs of synthetic turf systems, since manufacturers would likely pass on the additional costs to the end users. For local schools and municipalities, adding recycling costs to the bid costs means less money for future fields and field maintenance programs, which decreases the lifespan of turf and creates the need for more frequent replacement fields. Such additional, unnecessary expense could result in some financially challenged school districts being priced out of synthetic turf fields, which offer safe playing conditions even following inclement weather that can impact the safety of natural grass fields.
- *More Athletic Injuries and Less Usable Time:* Synthetic turf fields provide more playing time especially where there are space limitations, such as in more urban locations. In addition, natural grass fields become damaged when overused or used during such inclement weather experienced in the state of Maryland. This results in field conditions that can be unsafe for the people using the fields and result in injuries and costly replacement/repair work on the field. Synthetic turf fields allow the users to have a quality and uniform playing surface during all weather conditions.

RRP is dedicated to continuous improvement of the performance and environmental impact of synthetic turf systems and would be pleased to address any questions that you may have concerning synthetic turf systems, especially the repurposing of turf and infill.

Thank you for your consideration.

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