



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:
Dan Bond
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Dear Chair Davis, Vice-Chair Dumais and members of the Economic Matters Committee,

My name is Dan Bond and on behalf of the Synthetic Turf Council (STC), I am writing in opposition to House Bill No. 1547. The STC is headquartered in Forest Hill, MD and is the world's largest organization representing the synthetic turf industry. Founded in 2003, the STC represents over 260 members and promotes industry excellence through guidelines, certifications, and other learning platforms. Membership includes builders, landscape architects, engineers, testing labs, maintenance providers, manufacturers, suppliers, installation contractors, infill material suppliers and other specialty service companies. Additionally, my son and daughter both go to school in Bethesda, MD, where they enjoy playing on the school's synthetic turf field.

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 the right to extend the life of the turf as they are able to do.

The synthetic turf industry is already focused on recycling and reuse, and synthetic turf already includes reclaimed and recycled materials. For example, the apparel company Adidas recently announced that it has taken 1,800,000 plastic bottles and turned them into a sustainable synthetic turf football field in Miami Gardens, FL. The company built the field from plastic bottles sourced from remote islands, beaches, coastal communities and shorelines – the plastic was washed and treated before it was transformed into infill, which was used to build the artificial field.¹

¹ Adidas, Adidas made a sustainable football field using 1.8 million plastic bottles, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/02/02/us/adidas-football-field-trnd/index.html>



STC member companies have already developed reuse and recycling options for synthetic turf that has reached the next stage of its useful life, and are looking at how to further these advancements. Several member companies are accepting recovered synthetic turf and providing assistance with removal, cleaning and warehousing turf that is suitable for reuse. Reuse options include arena football fields, tee mats, sand trap liners, landscape liner material, golf products, residential and commercial landscape areas and door mats. Our members have also developed processes to collect and separate materials so that when turf reaches the end of its use on the field or playground it can be processed into post-consumer recycle content products. This next stage turf received in rolls can be processed into plastic pellets that are suitable for injection molding, rotational molding and profile extrusion. Products produced include carpet and turf backing, resilient flooring, curbing and infill.

Mandating an extended producer responsibility program would negatively impact the environment and possibly player safety. 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. Additionally, synthetic turf fields provide more playing time especially where there are space limitations, such as in more urban locations.

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. The environmental sustainability and benefits of synthetic turf are well documented. Synthetic turf enables owners to conserve billions of gallons of water each year. One typical grass sports field uses between 500,000 to a million gallons of water each year.² Furthermore, the use of synthetic turf decreases harmful CO₂ emissions by eliminating the use of gas powered lawn care equipment. As of February 2020, there are 413 ppm (parts per million) of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.³ 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.

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.

A mandated program would also slow the industry's rapidly advancing innovation and impede technological progress. I recently spoke with a world renowned company in Holland that has developed a technology to accept next stage turf, separate out the infill, and convert the yarn and

² Synthetic Turf Council, Benefits of Synthetic Turf, https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.syntheticurfCouncil.org/resource/resmgr/media/benefits_of_synthetic_turf.pdf.

³ CO₂ Earth, <https://www.co2.earth/>.



backing into a shock absorption layer under new turf to increase player safety. This company is planning to expand its recycling facilities into the US in the next year. Another company based in Ohio is in the medical disposal industry and is modifying its existing equipment to enter the industry and accept next stage turf to process into a second life material. These are just two of the recent examples of companies moving into the industry to advance the technology and capacity of next stage turf.

The STC technical guidance document on removal, recovery, reuse and recycling of synthetic turf and its components offers practical solutions for next stage turf that doesn't involve incineration or landfilling. The guidance document is available for free to download on our website.⁴

The STC and its members worldwide are dedicated to continuous improvement of the performance and environmental impact of synthetic turf systems and would be happy to assist in clarifying the uncertainties or questions that you may have concerning synthetic turf systems.

Thank you for your consideration.

Dan Bond

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⁴ Synthetic Turf Council, A Guideline to Recycle, Reuse, Repurpose and Remove Synthetic Turf Systems, https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.syntheticurfCouncil.org/resource/resmgr/guidelines/STC_Guideline_for_Recycle_Reuse.pdf.