

**House Bill 457 - Environment - Synthetic Turf - Chain of Custody**

**Education, Energy and the Environment (Senate) - March 20, 2024**

**SUPPORT**

**Submitted by Megan Stallard, SCAC Councilmember**

Good afternoon Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Honorable members of the committee.

My name is Megan Stallard. I am a freshman at Poolesville High School and a member of the inaugural MCPS Student Climate Action Council (SCAC), sanctioned by the Board of Education to advise it on sustainability issues and to support student sustainability projects with a several thousand dollar budget. This testimony is not written on behalf of the SCAC. However, as a student leader and climate advocate, I urge a favorable committee report on bill HB457.

While this bill is not everything that needs to be done regarding the issue of artificial turfs, it is a huge step in the right direction. The SCAC has spent the last several months researching and preparing a report on the advantages and disadvantages of artificial turf and natural grass. Our report is unbiased, but the information that we have found highlights the concern around the usage of artificial turf, both due to environmental and health reasons. First, artificial turf heats up much more than natural grass, due to the materials it is made out of, creating a “heat island” effect that is very dangerous for players, causing burns and other injuries. In addition, artificial turf contains toxic and carcinogenic chemicals, which are damaging to humans and the environment. Thus, when they are discarded it is imperative to know where these fields are, and what's going to be done with them, because otherwise we cannot ensure that we dispose of these fields safely. Unfortunately, the state of Maryland has hundreds of synthetic

turf fields, currently, we don't know where they are going. Our generation needs a system in place as a basis to deal with the mess that we've inherited. As a student, and as a representative of the 160,000 students of MCPS, I strongly urge a favorable committee report on bill HB457. Tracking artificial fields is not a complicated process; there are no significant expenditures necessary. However, it's a necessary step we need to take to protect our students and our future.