

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Testimony on: HB457 – Environment – Synthetic Turf – Chain of Custody
Submitting: Dave Arndt
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: March 19, 2024

I live in Baltimore where I just saw Under Armour replace a synthetic turf field at their water front headquarters. The old field was ripped-up, thrown into a dumpster and was going to be disposed of. I ask the waste hauler where it was going, they did not know, but speculated that it was either to the Baltimore landfill or the incinerator. I wish this was the only unmanaged turf field in my Locust Point neighborhood of Baltimore, there is at least 5 others that are close to the end of their life.

This bill establishes a simple chain of custody for synthetic turf fields, to track fields as they are installed or removed. By building transparency across the installation, removal, and transfer of each synthetic turf field, Maryland can deter their improper disposal and prevent contamination of soil and water with the material's known harmful chemicals.

HB457 will require the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to: 1) establish a system to track the lifecycle chain of custody of synthetic turf and turf infill installed on sports playing fields sold or distributed in Maryland; 2) require current and future owners/transporters of fields to report to MDE on synthetic turf and turf infill whenever it changes custody; and 3) require MDE to post the chain of custody information on synthetic turf and turf infill playing fields on its website.

Currently, there is no official inventory of the number or location of synthetic turf playing fields in Maryland or where used fields go, once they are removed, usually every 8-12 years. Tracking synthetic fields throughout their lifecycle is extremely important to protect both public health and the environment. Many components of synthetic turf fields are toxic, including heavy metals, carcinogens, endocrine disruptors, PFAS ("forever chemicals") and more. Also, discarded synthetic turf fields can be a source of microplastics in the environment.

HB457 represents a common-sense solution to keeping tracking of synthetic turf fields once they are removed and every time the material is transported. It is simply good public accountability and transparency, and HB457 ensures that MDE can keep track of synthetic turf materials and that the public can stay informed.

I encourage a FAVORABLE report for this important legislation.

Thank you,

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