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Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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HB 457 – ENVIRONMENT – SYNTHETIC TURF - CHAIN OF CUSTODY

SUPPORT

GOOD AFTERNOON CHAIR FELDMAN, VICE CHAIR KAGAN AND ESTEEMED COMMITTEE MEMBERS. FOR THE RECORD, I'M DELEGATE MARY LEHMAN, REQUESTING A FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION OF HB 457, A BILL CREATING A CHAIN OF CUSTODY REPORTING SYSTEM FOR SYNTHETIC TURF PLAYING FIELDS.

THIS IS MY SIXTH YEAR WORKING ON LEGISLATION THAT DOCUMENTS WHERE SYNTHETIC TURF PLAYING FIELDS ARE LOCATED IN MARYLAND, AND WHERE THEY GO WHEN THEY ARE MOVED, WHETHER IT BE TO A RECYCLING FACILITY, A WASTE DISPOSAL PLANT, OR TO REPLACE AN EXISTING PLAYING FIELD.

THE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE PASSED THE BILL AMENDED IN 2022, AND IT WAS PASSED BY THE FULL HOUSE. THE SENATE EHEA COMMITTEE NEVER VOTED ON THE HOUSE BILL OR THE SENATE CROSS-FILE. IN 2023, THE HOUSE PASSED THE BILL WITH BIPARTISAN SUPPORT, 103-31; BUT THE SENATE EEE COMMITTEE NEVER VOTED ON THE HOUSE BILL.

THIS BILL IS SAME AS THE 2023 BILL, WHICH PASSED THE FULL HOUSE LAST YEAR.

This bill passed the house includes A FRIENDLY AMENDMENT TO THE BILL THAT REQUIRES THE SELLER OF A SYNTHETIC TURF FIELD TO PROVIDE THE BUYER, PRIOR TO THE SALE, WITH CERTAIN INFORMATION RELATED TO THE LIFESPAN, COST OF FIELD MAINTENANCE AND REMOVAL, AS WELL AS THE REQUIREMENT THAT THE CUSTODIAN REPORT TO THE STATE OF MARYLAND THE INFORMATION SPECIFIED IN THIS BILL. THIS AMENDMENT WAS REQUESTED BY TURF FIELD MANAGERS TO ENSURE THAT PURCHASERS HAVE INFORMATION THAT ENABLES THEM TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS ABOUT THEIR OBLIGATIONS AND LIKELY MAINTENANCE AND DISPOSAL EXPENSES AND CHALLENGES.

WHAT THE BILL DOES: IT REQUIRES OWNERS AND MANUFACTURERS OF EXISTING SYNTHETIC TURF FIELDS, WHICH INCLUDE THE PLASTIC CARPETING, INFILL MATERIAL, AND SHOCK PAD, TO REPORT INFORMATION TO THE MD DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT (MDE) ABOUT THE LOCATION, CUSTODIAN, BRAND NAME OF THE FIELD, SIZE IN SQUARE FEET AND ESTIMATED WEIGHT, AND THE DATE IT WAS INSTALLED. MDE WILL POST THE INFORMATION ON A PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE WEB SITE, WHICH THEY WILL DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN.

AS OF NOW, THE ONLY SOURCE OF THIS INFORMATION IS A DATABASE OF INSTALLED FIELDS THAT DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS CREATED THREE YEARS AGO AND HAVE UPDATED ANNUALLY. THEY RELY EXCLUSIVELY ON PUBLICALLY AVAILABLE INFORMATION AND ANNECTDOTAL REPORTS REGARDING FIELD SIZE, COMPOSITION, CUSTODIAN, MANUFACTURER, ETC. THEY HAVE NO ABILITY TO TRACK WHERE THESE FIELDS GO WHEN THEY ARE MOVED.

SINCE 2021, MARYLAND SIERRA CLUB VOLUNTEERS HAVE LOCATED 437 SYNTHETIC TURF FIELDS IN 19 OF MARYLAND'S COUNTIES AND IN BALTIMORE CITY. FOR THE 403 FIELDS WITH A REPORTED SIZE, THE WASTE PRODUCED OVER THE NEXT DECADE AS THEY ARE REPLACED WOULD AMOUNT TO:

- MORE THAN 79,000 TONS OF PLASTIC CARPET AND INFILL;
- MORE THAN 144,000 CUBIC YARDS OF INFILL, THE EQUIVALENT OF 4,819 30-YD DUMPSTERS;
AND
- 28.9 MILLION SQUARE FEET OF PLASTIC CARPET
(633 ACRES).

UNDER THE TERMS OF THIS BILL, CUSTODIANS WILL BE REQUIRED TO REPORT SPECIFIC INFORMATION TO MDE WHEN A FIELD IS MOVED, AND THAT INFORMATION WILL ALSO BE PUBLICLY AVAILABLE ON THE WEBSITE MDE WILL CREATE FOR THIS PURPOSE.

IF A FIELD IS MOVED TO AN OUT-OF-STATE LOCATION, THERE WILL BE NO ONGOING REPORTING REQUIREMENT FOR ITS OUT-OF-STATE CUSTODIAN.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO HAVE TRANSPARENCY AROUND THE INSTALLATION, MOVEMENT AND DISPOSAL OF SYNTHETIC TURF FIELDS?

1. FIRST, THEY POSE AN ENORMOUS SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL CHALLENGE GIVEN THEIR SIZE, NUMBER, AND THE FACT THAT THERE ARE VERY FEW DISPOSAL SITES IN MARYLAND THAT WILL ACCEPT THEM.
2. SECOND, BY TRACKING THEIR MOVEMENT, BOTH MDE AND INTERESTED MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WILL HAVE ACCURATE INFORMATION ABOUT DISPOSAL PATTERNS AND LOCATIONS.
3. THIRD, THE INFORMATION COLLECTED WILL HOLD INDUSTRY ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR COMMITMENT TO ENSURING ADEQUATE OPTIONS FOR REUSE, RECYCLING, REPURPOSING AND DISPOSAL.

VIOLATORS OF THE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS WILL FIRST BE ISSUED A WRITTEN NOTICE OF VIOLATION BY MDE; AND IF THEY DO NOT BECOME COMPLIANT, THEY CAN THEN BE ISSUED AN ADMINISTRATIVE PENALTY THAT DOES NOT EXCEED \$5000.00

MR. CHAIRMAN, I BELIEVE THAT DOCUMENTING THE CHAIN OF CUSTODY FOR THIS TYPE OF SOLID WASTE IS A REASONABLE STEP FOR THE STATE OF MARYLAND TO TAKE AT A POINT IN TIME WHEN THE ESTIMATED CUMULATIVE SIZE OF THE INSTALLED FIELDS EXCEEDS 79,000 TONS OF PLASTIC CARPET AND INFILL, MANY ARE REACHING THEIR AVERAGE END-OF-LIFE, BASED ON THE DATA COLLECTED BY VOLUNTEERS, AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND DISPOSAL OPTIONS IN MARYLAND ARE EXTREMELY LIMITED.

I AM REQUESTING FROM A FAVORABLE REPORT.