



HoCoClimateAction.org
Howard County, Maryland

[HB0457](#): Environment - Synthetic Turf - Chain of Custody

Hearing Date: March 20, 2024

Bill Sponsor: Delegates Lehman, Acevero, Addison, Allen, Alston, Amprey, Attar, Bagnall, Barnes, Boaf, Boyce, Charkoudian, Davis, Ebersole, Edelson, Fair, Foley, Forbes, Fraser-Hidalgo, Guyton, Guzzone, Harris, Healey, Hill, Holmes, Ivey, S. Johnson, D. Jones, Kaufman, J. Long, R. Long, Lopez, Love, Martinez, McCaskill, Palakovich Carr, Pasteur, Patterson, Pena-Melnyk, Phillips, Pruski, Qi, Ruth, Shetty, Simmons, Simpson, Smith, Solomon, Stein, Stewart, Taveras, Taylor, Terrasa, Vogel, Williams, Woods, and Ziegler

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Submitting: Liz Feighner for **HoCo Climate Action**

Position: Favorable

[HoCo Climate Action](#) is a [350.org](#) local chapter and a grassroots organization representing approximately 1,400 subscribers. It is also a member of the [Climate Justice Wing](#) of the [Maryland Legislative Coalition](#). We support HB0457 and urge a favorable report.

The plastic crisis is a climate crisis and our members have worked with several organizations in Howard County to advocate for reducing single-use plastics through two successful bills, [Plastic Bag Fee](#) and [Plastic Reduction Law](#). We also co-hosted a [webinar on the Story of Plastics in 2020](#). As we highlighted during the discussion, plastic pollution is an environmental justice and public health crisis: Fracking, plastics production, litter, and disposal in landfills and by incineration harm communities of color disproportionately. We believe that social justice, racial justice and environmental justice are all part of a single, globally connected Movement for Justice.

An average synthetic turf field is 80,000 square feet and comprised of 40,000 lb of mixed plastic carpet and 400,000 lb of infill between the plastic blades, usually crumb tire waste and silica sand, or other material. **This is equivalent to 3.2 million plastic bags and 46 million plastic straws**, according to [SHPFI's data related to a project in Lakewood, FL](#), reversing the progress made in reducing plastics in Howard County. The Maryland Sierra Club estimates that in Howard County alone there are 47 synthetic turf fields weighing 9,190.4 tons and covering 3,341,964 square feet, and more are being planned. The materials in synthetic turf carpet systems contain aquatic and human toxins posed an environmental crisis.

Synthetic turf fields need to be replaced every 8-10 years adding to the toxic waste that needs to be dealt with. The estimate of the number of fields in all of Maryland total 437 weighing

79,276.9 tons and the data was compiled by volunteer Sierra Club members as there is no official inventory for the massive amount of waste being produced. Nor is there a way to know whether this toxic waste was properly disposed of or [in rural stockpiles](#) and dumped in the environment. When improperly disposed of and uncontained, especially near waterways, these materials pose risks to humans, wildlife, and the environment.

The fate of this massive amount of toxic plastic waste and infill is difficult, if not impossible, to track. This bill requires MDE to establish a system to track the chain of custody of synthetic turf and turf infill installed on sports playing fields, from installation to removal, reuse, repurposing, recycling, and disposal and publish this chain of custody information on MDE's website.

The state of Maryland needs to be tracking this type of hazardous waste to protect our waterways and our beloved Chesapeake Bay.

We urge a favorable report for HB0457.

Howard County Climate Action

Submitted by Liz Feighner, Steering and Advocacy Committee

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