



MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Delegate Marc Korman, Chair
Regina T. Boyce, Vice Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee Members
FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus
DATE: 3/15/2024
RE: HB0457 - Environment - Synthetic Turf - Chain of Custody

The MLLC supports HB0457 - Environment - Synthetic Turf - Chain of Custody

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB0457.

Synthetic turf is typically used for high-wear applications such as sports and training facilities, where degradation of the product can have safety and performance implications.¹ As a result, the life span of this product is relatively short, ranging between only five to ten years.² If synthetic turf is removed from a geographic location, it is often unclear what the final stage of this material is (i.e., recycled, processed for final disposal, used to refurbish or replace a sports or playing field).³ To further exacerbate its sustainability problem, conventional waste processing methods are poorly equipped to perform synthetic turf recycling effectively – synthetic turf recycling companies must separate the different plastics used in the product.⁴ These plastics – polyurethane or latex for the secondary backing, PET blades, and polypropylene fibers – have different viscosities and melting temperatures, and some, like the thick polyurethane or latex backing material, are not even thermoformed plastics⁵ at all.⁶ Ultimately, a large amount of synthetic turf is discarded to landfills, rural and urban stockpiles, ravines, deserts, woods, and empty lots once it reaches the end of life.⁷ Moreover, it is concerning that the disposal of synthetic turf could be done in ways that are harmful to the environment.

The Latino/Hispanic community is disproportionately affected by the effects of climate change and environmental degradation.⁸ Not only that, but often the Latino community does not receive

¹ Pilkington, B. (2021, March 29). *RECITURF: The Future of Artificial Turf Recycling*. AZoCleantech.com. <https://www.azocleantech.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=1195>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Only thermoplastics, plastics that can be thermoformed (heated or melted and shaped into a new product) can be recycled, according to Advanced Plastiform, Inc..

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Wolfe, E., & Lundstrom, M. (2019, December 19). *The Dangerous Pileup of Artificial Turf*. The Atlantic. <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2019/12/artificial-turf-fields-are-piling-no-recycling-fix/603874/>.

⁸ *Latinos communities and Climate Change: Why We Care and What We Can Do*. Environmental Defense Fund. (2016). https://www.edf.org/sites/default/files/content/latinos_and_climate_change_factsheet_0317_refresh.pdf.

the same level of protection from outdated environmental policies as other communities.⁹ Currently there are no state or federal regulations on the disposal of synthetic turf fields, despite the fact that each synthetic turf playing field contains about 200 tons of toxic mixed plastic waste: approximately two acres of plastic carpet with infill, typically from about 40,000 shredded waste tires or other plastic infill.¹⁰ The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Toxicology Program, focused on Tire Crumb Rubber infill in a 2015 study.¹¹ They identified certain potentially dangerous chemicals used in tire manufacture, which can leach out under high temperatures.¹² These include polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and zinc oxide, which can contain traces of heavy metals (lead, cadmium oxide).¹³ Other testing has shown the presence of highly fluorinated chemicals – Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) – in both the grass-like blades and backing of synthetic turf.¹⁴ PFAS break down slowly, and have been known to concentrate in humans, animals, and the environment.¹⁵

Finally, research from the University of Maryland Environmental Law Clinic found that people of color and low-income people in Maryland are also more likely to live in close proximity to Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) facilities.¹⁶ There are 168 TRI facilities spread throughout Maryland.¹⁷ Synthetic turf contains some of the harmful chemicals typically emitted from TRI facilities¹⁸, which can lead to increased risk of low birth weight, asthma, and cancer in exposed populations.¹⁹ Furthermore, low-income groups in Maryland living near TRI facilities are more likely to be medically underserved.²⁰ The combination of higher exposures to toxic pollution and the lack of access to medical care likely contribute to health disparities in those communities.²¹

This bill will establish standard reporting requirements and accountability measures that will ensure that the Latino community is not disproportionately affected by the environmentally harmful disposal of synthetic turf.

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB0457.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Wolfe & Lundstrom. *The Dangerous Pileup*.

¹¹ National Toxicology Program, NTP research report on Synthetic Turf/Recycled Tire Crumb Rubber (2019).

https://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/ntp/results/pubs/rr/reports/rr12_508.pdf?utm_source=direct&utm_medium=prod&utm_campaign=ntpgo_links&utm_term=rr12.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Jacobs, H. (2015). *Environmental Justice in Maryland*. Beveridge & Diamond PC.

<https://www.bdlaw.com/publications/environmental-justice-in-maryland/>.

¹⁷ Environmental Protection Agency. (2022, October). *2020 TRI Factsheet: State – Maryland*. EPA.

https://enviro.epa.gov/triexplorer/tri_factsheet.factsheet_forstate?pstate=md&pyear=2020&pParent=TRI&pDataSet=TRIO1.

¹⁸ Environmental Protection Agency. (n.d.). *TRI Data and Tools*. EPA.

<https://www.epa.gov/toxics-release-inventory-tri-program/tri-data-and-tools#tridata-facilities>.

¹⁹ Jacobs. *Environmental Justice*.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.