



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

March 5, 2020

TO: The Honorable Maggie McIntosh
Chair, Appropriations Committee

FROM: Marc Elrich
County Executive

RE: House Bill 1098 – *Use of Public Funds – Playground and Athletic Field Surfaces – Authorizations, Preferences, and Prohibitions (Safe and Healthy Fields Act) – Support*

House Bill 1098 requires State and local units of government responsible for the construction of playgrounds and athletic fields to give consideration and preference to “the use of state-of-the-art natural surfaces materials” to the maximum extent practicable if the project is to be paid for with public funds. The bill also prohibits State funds from being used to finance any portion of a project to build or replace a playground or athletic field with a synthetic surface. Synthetic surface is defined as “(i) artificial turf; and (ii) any ground cover made from plastic, rubber, or tires.”

This bill also allows the State’s share of Program Open Space (POS) capital improvement funds to be used for the maintenance and upkeep of grass athletic fields and drainage systems for grass athletic fields on land owned by the State. It allows a subdivision, as part of its local annual POS program, to request funds for the maintenance and upkeep of any grass athletic fields and drainage systems over the course of the project’s lifetime.

I support House Bill 1098 because it helps focus public funds where they are most needed. Synthetic surfaces can reach significantly higher temperatures than grass surfaces making it unsafe for prolonged play during the summer season. In addition, grass filters dirt and bacteria, absorbs carbon, and reduces heat. Well-designed grass fields seldom need to be completely rebuilt or replaced and last longer than those made from synthetic materials. Simply put, using public funds for artificial turf fields does not make sense in the public health, environmental, or fiscal arenas.

For the foregoing reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 1098.

cc: Members of the Appropriations Committee