



**HB1098 USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS – PLAYGROUND AND ATHLETIC FIELD SURFACES –
AUTHORIZATIONS, PREFERENCES, AND PROHIBITIONS (SAFE AND HEALTHY FIELDS ACT)**

March 5, 2020

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

OPPOSE

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) opposes **HB1098 Use of Public Funds – Playground and Athletic Field Surfaces – Authorizations, Preferences, and Prohibitions (Safe and Healthy Fields Act)**. This bill would prohibit the use of State funds to finance any portion of a project to build new or replace existing playgrounds or athletic fields with a synthetic surface. It would also require, to the maximum extent practicable, State or local governmental agencies to give consideration and preference to the use of state-of-the-art natural surface materials in any project to construct a playground or athletic field.

This legislation infringes on local decision-making and would result in funding losses for AACPS. In partnership with the Anne Arundel County government and its Department of Recreation and Parks, AACPS has made a concerted effort over the past decade to install at least one synthetic turf field at each AACPS public high school. As a result, the fields have been used by AACPS students as well as youth and adult sports leagues and club teams. Our community relies on the use of safe, sustainable, and reliable synthetic fields. Many of these initial installations and cyclical replacements have received State funding support via the Interagency Committee on School Construction's Public School Construction Capital Improvement Program or bond bills and grants awarded by the General Assembly. Therefore, the prohibition of future State and local county funding, as would be required under this bill, would significantly hamper our ability to continue supporting and expanding our synthetic turf initiative in Anne Arundel County.

Whether or not to use synthetic fields is a local decision and should remain as such. We, therefore, firmly support the role of local decision-making in evaluating the options for purchasing and maintaining these athletic fields and playgrounds. Whether or not to use synthetic fields is a local decision and should remain as such.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on HB1098.