



Caroline County Recreation *and* Parks

General James F. Fretterd Community Center
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HOUSE Bill 1098

Use of Public Funds – Playground and Athletic Field Surface_ authorizations, Preferences and Prohibition (Safe and Healthy Fields Act)

Caroline County, Maryland

Position: Oppose

Date: March 5, 2020

To: House Appropriations Committee

From: Susan C. Simmons, Director

Caroline County Recreation & Parks

Caroline County takes the safety and wellbeing of our parks and playground users very seriously. It also considers the decision of park design for safety surfacing for playgrounds and athletic fields to be a local one.

Program Open Space funding is a critical element of the land acquisition and capital park development for our citizens. This bill restricts the use of state funds for Poured-In-Place (PIP) surfacing for playground construction. When we use PIP surfaces, we are enhancing accessibility to the park for differently abled users. We are also in compliance with federal ADA requirements. We have and do use other materials such as wood fiber, but our user-advocates recognize the more stable and consistent surface of PIP as preferred.

Again, citizen safety and well-being will always be our concern, so we followed with great interest the 2019 discovery of lead levels in the PIP surfaces of DC public school playgrounds. The DC Department of General Services (DCDGS) response included the third-party testing of 60 school playgrounds. They did find lead on the playground safety surfaces, but this was not a result of the manufactured material. It was attributed to the urban environmental conditions - for example: lead-contaminated soil from construction activities or lead paint mitigation nearby. As a result, DCDGS has established some best management practices to monitor and clean these surfaces to eliminate lead contact by the children. These are practices that can be emulated by facility managers anywhere when local conditions merit. [A summary of test results available at <https://dgs.dc.gov/publication/playground-lead-survey-test-results> .]

Isolating state funding resources from specific surfacing applications hinders small, rural communities like Caroline from responding to public demand and federal requirements. We do not have deep pockets and alternative local funding sources to do this work.

Bringing the Community Together