March 5, 2020

Maryland General Assembly
Appropriations Committee, Room 121
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Written Testimony in opposition of: House Bill No. 1098:

Submitted by:
Dan Bond
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Synthetic Turf Council
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Dear Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Jackson and members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Dan Bond and on behalf of the Synthetic Turf Council (STC), I am writing in opposition to House Bill No. 1098. The STC is headquartered in Forest Hill, MD and is the world's largest organization representing the synthetic turf industry. Founded in 2003, the STC promotes industry excellence through guidelines, certifications, and other learning platforms. Membership includes builders, landscape architects, testing labs, maintenance providers, manufacturers, suppliers, installation contractors, infill material suppliers and other specialty service companies. Additionally, my son and daughter both go to school in Bethesda, MD, where they enjoy playing on the school's synthetic turf field.

Establishing a preference for the use of natural surface materials to construct playgrounds or athletic fields will have a negative impact on the environment and the health of Maryland residents. The environmental sustainability and benefits of synthetic turf in landscape and sports field applications are well documented. Synthetic turf enables home and field owners to conserve billions of gallons of water each year. One typical grass sports field uses between 500,000 to a million gallons of water each year.[1] As you recall, in mid-2019 Maryland experienced a lack of rain and unseasonably hot conditions which combined to produce what meteorologists called a "flash" drought. This followed the uneven rain and previous drought conditions earlier in the year. Synthetic turf offers an ideal solution to the state's unsteady weather conditions.

The use of synthetic turf decreases harmful CO2 emissions by eliminating the use of gas powered lawn care equipment. As of February 2020, there is an estimated 413 ppm (parts per million) of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.[2] The burning of fossil fuels releases carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. Additionally, synthetic turf does not require harmful lawn chemicals in order to maintain a

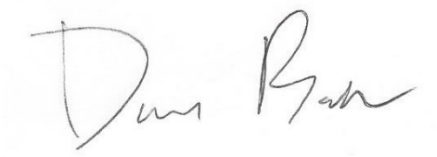
[1] Synthetic Turf Council, Benefits of Synthetic Turf, https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.syntheticturfcouncil.org/resource/resmgr/media/benefits_of_synthetic_turf.pdf.
[2] CO2 Earth, https://www.co2.earth/.

healthy and safe surface. Lawn chemicals are the fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides used in lawn care.

Parks and sports fields with synthetic turf promote year-round activity on safe and resilient surfaces. The Centers for Disease Control and Protection (CDC) states that in the United States, the percentage of children and adolescents affected by obesity has more than tripled since the 1970s.[3] Additionally, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recommends that children and adolescents aged 6 to 17 years should have at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day.[4] The CDC reports that of Maryland's children aged 2 years to less than 5 years, 16.5 percent are overweight and 15.7 percent are obese. Regarding Maryland's adults, 65.4 percent are overweight and 27.1 percent are obese.[5] Synthetic turf fields enable increased activity in nearly all weather conditions which helps reduce obesity and promotes well-being. Removing opportunities for children and adults to exercise will only exacerbate this growing problem.

Synthetic turf also provides a sustainable alternative for overused and unsafe natural grass sports fields. A grass field simply cannot remain lush if it is used more than three to four days a week, or in the rain, or during the six months of the year when grass does not grow. Otherwise the field will become unsafe, rock-hard and covered in dirt. Since synthetic turf can withstand so much wear and tear, many schools can even rent their synthetic turf fields to local sports team and organizations to bring in extra funding. This frees up new funds for the classroom.

Thank you for your consideration.



Dan Bond, CAE
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Synthetic Turf Council

[3] CDC Healthy Schools, Childhood Obesity Facts, https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/index.htm.
[4] 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for America, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, https://health.gov/paguidelines/2008/pdf/paguide.pdf.
[5] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity, Maryland State Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Profile, https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/stateprograms/fundedstates/pdf/maryland-state-profile.pdf.