

February 19, 2020

Maryland General Assembly  
Economic Matters Committee, Room 230  
House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Written Testimony in opposition of House Bill No. 1547:

Submitted by:  
Todd S. DeWolfe  
Vice President of Sales  
AstroTurf Corporation  
2680 Abutment Rd, Dalton, GA 30721

Dear Chair Davis, Vice-Chair Dumais and members of the Economic Matters Committee,

My name is Todd S. DeWolfe and on behalf of AstroTurf Corporation, I am writing in opposition to House Bill No. 1547. On behalf of AstroTurf Corporation, I am writing in opposition to House Bill No. 1547. AstroTurf was invented in 1964 and is now part of the SportGroup, arguably the largest sports surfacing company in the world. AstroTurf/SportGroup is a global leader of artificial turf systems with more than 1,000 employees. Founded 40 years ago, SportGroup has supplied more than 7,000 artificial turf surfaces globally. AstroTurf part of the turf industry in the state of Maryland for years and has numerous fields in the state that activities are enjoyed by thousands of athletes every day.

Requiring a producer of synthetic turf and turf infill to submit an extended producer responsibility stewardship plan to the Maryland Department of the Environment for review and approval would negatively impact the synthetic turf owner, environment, player safety and the rapidly advancing industry recycling technology. End users are the owners of the synthetic turf, not the manufacturers. By requiring the end user to give up possession of the synthetic turf through this stewardship program, **you are taking away something of value to them and the right to extend the life of the turf as they are able to do.**

We are focused on recycling and reuse, and synthetic turf already includes reclaimed and recycled materials. Just one example of how we are developing reuse and recycling options for synthetic turf that has reached the next stage of its useful life, we are actively pursuing technologies to improve recycling avenues for end users including finding next life uses for materials.

Across our industry, reuse options include arena football fields, tee mats, sand trap liners, landscape liner material, golf products, residential and commercial landscape areas and door mats. Our industry has also developed processes to collect and separate materials so that when turf reaches the end of its use on the field or playground it can be processed into post-consumer recycle content products. This next stage turf received in rolls can be processed into plastic pellets that are suitable for injection molding, rotational molding and profile extrusion. Products produced include carpet and turf backing, resilient flooring, curbing and infill.

**Mandating an extended producer responsibility program would have many negative consequences for Maryland by encouraging the use of inferior products, including:**

- **Negative Environmental Impact:** By mandating this program with additional costs for synthetic turf, the use of synthetic turf in Maryland will decline, which will increase water consumption and CO2 emissions, and the use of harmful lawn chemicals. One typical grass sports field uses between 500,000 to a million gallons of water each year. Furthermore, the use of synthetic turf decreases harmful CO2 emissions by eliminating the use of gas-powered lawn care equipment. Also, synthetic turf does not require harmful lawn chemicals in order to maintain a healthy and safe surface. Lawn chemicals are the fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides used in lawn care.
- **Increased Costs For Local Municipalities:** A stewardship program would increase the costs of synthetic turf systems, since manufacturers would likely pass on the additional costs to the end users. For local schools and municipalities, adding recycling costs to the bid costs means less money for future fields and field maintenance programs, which decreases the lifespan of turf and creates the need for more frequent replacement fields. Such additional, unnecessary expense could result in some financially challenged school districts being priced out of synthetic turf fields, which offer safe playing conditions even following inclement weather that can impact the safety of natural grass fields.
- **More Athletic Injuries And Less Usable Time:** Synthetic turf fields provide more playing time especially where there are space limitations, such as in more urban locations. In addition, natural grass fields become damaged when overused or used during such inclement weather experienced in the state of Maryland. This results in field conditions that can be unsafe for the people using the fields and result in injuries and costly replacement/repair work on the field. Synthetic turf fields allow the users to have a quality and uniform playing surface during all weather conditions.

We are dedicated to continuous improvement of the performance and environmental impact of synthetic turf systems and would be happy to assist in clarifying the uncertainties or questions that you may have concerning synthetic turf systems.

Thank you for your consideration.

Todd S. DeWolfe

*Todd S. DeWolfe*