



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

www.womensdemocraticclub.org

House Bill 857
Environment - Synthetic Turf and Turf Infill - Chain of Custody and Reuse
House Environment and Transportation and Economic Matters Committees
February 24, 2021
SUPPORT

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2021 legislative session. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic Clubs in our County with hundreds of politically active women and men, including many elected officials.

WDC urges the passage of HB0857. This bill will require manufacturers, purchasers, or owners of synthetic turf (synturf) and turf infill used on playing fields to file with the Maryland Department of the Environment a chain of custody of synturf and turf infill from their manufacture through their reuse, recycling, or final disposal under certain circumstances. There is currently no regulation or accountability for the reuse, recycling, or disposal of the component materials of synturf. In a 2019 Maryland legislative hearing on synturf disposal, Dan Bond, president of the leading trade group Synthetic Turf Council (STC), was asked, "Are there any laws or regulations regarding the disposal of this material [synthetic turf]?" Mr. Bond replied, "Not that I am aware of."

Local, national, and international media outlets have covered the growing problem of synturf waste. *The Atlantic*, *Salon*, and *Maryland Matters* all published "*Fields of Waste*,"¹ an investigative report documenting the massive accumulation of used synturf material throughout the United States. A public broadcast investigative report, "*The Turf Mountain*"² further revealed the extent of discarded synturf rolls and infill across Europe. Every synturf field contains tens of thousands of pounds of chemical-laden plastic and hundreds of thousands of pounds of infill (usually tire waste, or alternative plastic infills, and silica sand).

¹ *Fields of Waste*," <https://www.marylandmatters.org/2019/12/21/fields-of-waste-artificial-turf-becomes-mounting-disposal-mess/>; "Artificial turf, touted as recycling fix for millions of scrap tires, becomes mounting disposal mess - Where do the millions of square feet of synthetic turf go to die?" https://www.salon.com/2019/12/21/artificial-turf-touted-as-recycling-fix-for-millions-of-scrap-tires-becomes-mounting-disposal-mess_partner/; "The Dangerous Pile-Up of Artificial Turf," https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2019/12/artificial-turf-fields-are-piling-no-recycling-fix/603874/?utm_sq=gagte0qii9

² Zembla (2018, September 13). *What happens to plastic and polluting artificial turf?* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5o3J7uy4Tk>



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

www.womensdemocraticclub.org

The STC itself recommends end-of-life chain of custody certification, and describes the disposal issue as “enormous” and “challenging.” STC members can follow its *Guidelines to Recycle, Reuse, Repurpose, and Remove Synthetic Turf Systems*.³ However, without regulations there is no incentive to do so. Instead, there is a history of unsubstantiated and inaccurate claims from synturf companies regarding the reuse, recycling, and disposal of their product. These are refuted by the many examples of irresponsible disposal – including dumping the material in lower-income communities. Several Maryland counties’ municipal solid waste facilities have said they would not accept the volume, weight, and mixture of this waste. The *Maryland Matters* publication included photos of synturf and tire waste infill being moved in May 2018 from a high school in Montgomery County to a property beside Bird River in Baltimore County, which was documented at the time by citizens asking questions and conducting their own research.

Stakeholders and citizens should be able to access a chain of custody showing what happens to the material; **the STC’s own guidelines support this goal**. In the absence of an industry-led initiative, regulation is needed to ensure transparency and accountability when synturf fields and infill reach the end of their lifespan. Maryland is not alone in facing this problem but has the opportunity to move toward a solution with the passage of HB0857.

We ask for your support for HB0857 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Diana Conway
President

³ Recycle and Reuse Committee. (October 2017). *A Guideline To Recycle, Reuse, Repurpose And Remove Synthetic Turf Systems*. Synthetic Surf Council.
https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.syntheticurfCouncil.org/resource/resmgr/guidelines/STC_Guideline_for_Recycle_Re.pdf