



Olivia Bartlett, Co-Lead, DoTheMostGood Maryland Team

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: HB0857 - Environment – Synthetic Turf and Turf Infill – Chain of Custody and Reuse

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 24, 2021

Bill Contact: Delegate Mary Lehman

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with more than 2500 members who live in a wide range of communities in Montgomery and Frederick Counties, from Bethesda near the DC line north to Frederick and from Poolesville east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep all the members of our communities healthy and safe in a clean environment and that address equity for all residents in our communities. DTMG strongly supports HB0857 because it will provide transparency about disposal of toxic used synthetic turf and infill for synthetic turf fields above 5,000 sq ft.

Synthetic turf fields are increasingly popular. They are made from rolls of plastic “grass” blades weighed down and filled in with hundreds of thousands of pounds of “infill” made from ground up used tires, silica sand, and/or alternative plastic particles. Standard infill volume is six to nine pounds of infill per square foot. However, the plastic “grass” contains PFAS and other toxins and ground up tires are also known to contain multiple toxins. Each synthetic turf playing field contains about 200 tons of toxic mixed plastic waste: approximately two acres of plastic carpet with infill, typically from about 40,000 shredded waste tires or other plastic infill. The removal and replacement cycle for synthetic turf fields is typically every six to ten years.

This results in a huge amount of toxic waste. 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*”, an investigative report documenting the massive accumulation of used synthetic turf material throughout the US. There is no recycling of synthetic turf in US. Anne Arundel, Prince George’s, and Montgomery County municipal solid waste facilities report they would decline used synthetic turfs due to volume and weight. There are also no state or federal regulations for safe disposal of synthetic turf or its infill.

Instead, there is a history of unsubstantiated and inaccurate claims from synthetic turf 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. The *Maryland Matters* publication included photos of synthetic turf 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.

HB0857 will address this important and growing problem by requiring manufacturers, purchasers, or owners of synthetic turf and turf infill used on playing fields over 5,000 sq. ft. to report to the Maryland Department of the Environment the chain of custody of the synthetic turf and turf infill from their manufacture to their reuse, recycling, or final disposal under certain circumstances. Each custodian will be responsible only for its own portion in the chain of custody.

In a 2019 Maryland legislative hearing on disposal of synthetic turf, the president of the leading trade group, the Synthetic Turf Council (STC), acknowledged that there are no laws or regulations regarding the disposal of synthetic turf. 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*. However, there is no incentive to do so. Typical disposal is ‘stockpiling,’ landfill, or dumping.

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, legislation is needed to ensure transparency and accountability when synthetic turf 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 HB0857. Therefore, DTMG strongly supports HB0857 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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