

Testimony in support of HB0857

West Montgomery County Citizens Association is a civic organization founded in 1947 that works to help protect neighborhoods and green wedges, preserve stream river valleys, and monitor development in the Potomac subregion. **WMCCA strongly supports HB0857**, to require manufacturers and owners of synthetic turf and turf infill with the Maryland Department of the Environment disclosing the owner and location of the field and infill.

Roughly 40,000 scrap tires go into the making of each synthetic turf field, along with hundreds of tons of mixed plastic. That means each synthetic turf field that is either carted off to a landfill or dumped at unmarked locations contains tens of thousands of pounds of plastic material containing PFAS (polyfluoroalkyl substances) and other harmful chemicals, in addition to hundreds of thousands of pounds of pulverized infill of tire or other plastic.

Every year, more than a thousand of these synthetic turf fields have to be ripped out, (typical lifespan is 8-10 years) and disposed of according to the Synthetic Turf Council, (STC) the industry's leading association. The STC estimates that 80 million square feet of plastic carpet weighing 40 million pounds and 400 million pounds of infill, usually made of tire waste, and it all has to go somewhere. The disturbing fact here is that no one is monitoring, much less regulating where used, synthetic turf fields go when they are removed. Several municipal solid waste disposal facilities in Maryland have said they would not accept used synthetic turf waste due to the weight and volume that are associated with a single playing field.

In addition, recycling facilities in this country have rejected synthetic turf fields and infills because it is usually too costly to separate the materials. That means these chemical-laden plastic carpets are either being incinerated, repurposed, or dumped "in ravines, deserts, woods, and empty lots" according to a Fair Warning investigative report [1], and dumping often happens in lower income communities. That is a big problem, not only here in Maryland, but everywhere. The direct impact on aquatic life has been documented in many sources. See the following:

<https://www.marylandmatters.org/2020/02/20/proposed-legislation-could-see-more-environmentally-friendly-turf-removal/>

^[2] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5o3J7uy4Tk>

Since no regulations currently exist governing the disposal or recycling of these materials, synthetic turf companies have been known to make unsubstantiated and sometimes flat-out false claims regarding reuse, recycling, and disposal of their product at the end of their lifespans, as they have done with officials and parents within Montgomery County Public Schools at "information meetings."

If the Synthetic Turf Council recommends end-of-life chain of custody certification, and it does, why wouldn't Maryland lawmakers support such legislation?

Under HB0857, Maryland can be at the forefront of an industry whose waste products should have been regulated years ago.

WMCCA whole-heartedly supports HBO857, and we ask that you **favorably report out HB0857**. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Carol Falk
Executive Board Member, West Montgomery County Citizens Association