

**Testimony on: HB321 – SUPPORT**

**Committee: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs**

**Synthetic Turf & Turf Infill-Chain of Custody**

**Submitting: Kathleen Michels, PhD**

**Hearing date : February 2, 2022**

**SB321 SUPPORT - Environment – Synthetic Turf and Turf Infill – Chain of Custody**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

We support transparency and accountability in disposal of this significant solid waste that will adversely affect our waterways and groundwater when not disposed of appropriately. A Chain of Custody system will also be a support for responsible recycling when that becomes available since the fate of the field will become transparent.

This bill would require chain of custody reporting of the turf and infill for reuse, recycling, or final disposal. Currently there are no such regulations despite the fact that each turf field contains tens of thousands of pounds of chemical-laden plastic and hundreds of thousands of pounds of granulated infill (usually tire waste, or alternative infills, and silica sand). According to the Synthetic Turf Council, the industry's leading association, one thousand deconstructed fields per year in the U.S. represent 80 million square feet of turf carpet weighing 40 million pounds and 400 million pounds of infill.

Synthetic turf's typical lifespan is a period of 8-10 years. Used synthetic turf materials may be landfilled, incinerated, repurposed or dumped in communities which then must deal with the waste. The synthetic component materials that make up artificial turf carpet systems contain known aquatic and human toxins, carcinogens, endocrine disruptors, heavy metals, carcinogens, and immune disruptors such as PFAS, or "forever chemicals."

Several Maryland municipal waste facilities do not accept the volume, weight, and mixture of synthetic turf which then leads to illegal dumping. Numerous examples of irresponsible disposal exist including dumped or stockpiled material in lower income communities, including a 2018 example where a turf field from Richard Montgomery High School in Montgomery County was dumped near the Bird River in Baltimore County. Another field (Walter Johnson HS) was reportedly shipped to an uncertain fate halfway around the world in Malaysia.

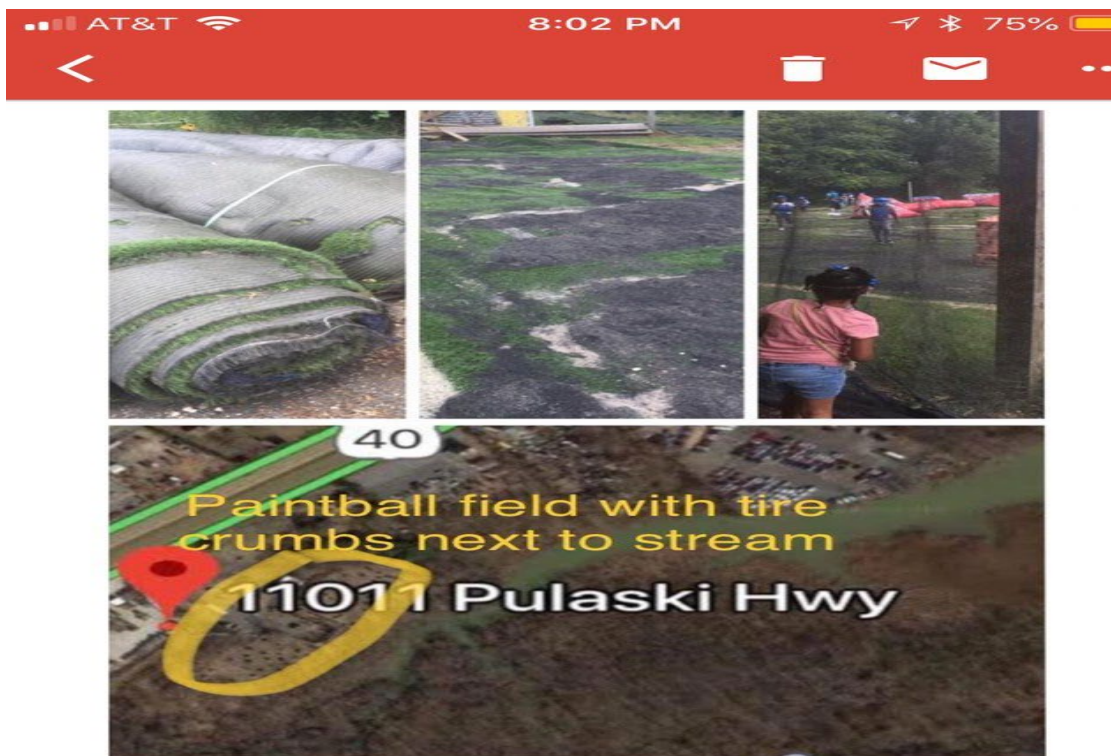
The technology for recycling synthetic turf, which involves separating the plastic grass and backing from the sand and rubber infill is complicated and has not been fully developed, so when a synthetic turf owner wants to do the right thing and tries to recycle, they have limited options. Right now, municipalities and jurisdictions in Maryland as well as other regions across the country where these plastic carpets are dumped are the same jurisdictions that are forced to deal with the environmental and physical mess as they have no way of knowing

who dumped the used turf without a chain of custody tracking system, as proposed in HB131. **A Chain of Custody system will also be a support for responsible recycling when that becomes available since the fate of the field will become transparent and customers will want to do the right thing.**

Our environment, waterways and municipalities suffer from inappropriate disposal of the plastic carpeting and infill from synthetic turf. Stakeholders have the right to know what happens to materials and hold those responsible for the materials accountable through a documented chain of custody reporting. Transparency and accountability regarding synthetic turf disposal must be required.

**We refer you to multiple press reports and information about unfortunate dumping of synthetic turf at [www.sierraclub.org/maryland/synthetic-turf](http://www.sierraclub.org/maryland/synthetic-turf)**

I support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.



RMHS artificial turf carpet and tire crumbs now reside here. Please ask yourself if this appears to be environmentally responsible. Where will the tire crumb waste be this time next

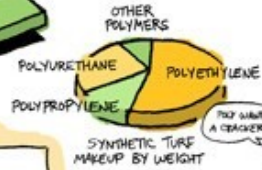
# LIFECYCLE OPTIONS OF SYNTHETIC TURF

SYNTHETIC TURF FIELDS HAVE AN AVERAGE LIFESPAN OF

**10 YEARS**

THE AVERAGE SYNTHETIC TURF FIELD IS **76,800** SQUARE FEET.

... SO WHAT HAPPENS TO THE OLD FIELDS? ONE OF **FOUR** THINGS:



**1**



THIS IS BY FAR WHAT HAPPENS TO MOST SYNTHETIC TURF FIELDS. ON AVERAGE, ONE FIELD WEIGHS **42,778 LBS.** AND THE INFILL WEIGHS **422,400 LBS.**

TOGETHER, THAT'S THE SAME AMOUNT OF ANNUAL WASTE PRODUCED BY **267** AMERICANS.

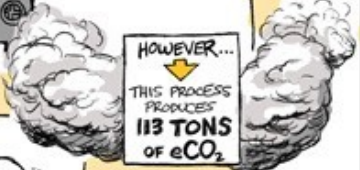
**2**

BETWEEN 2014 & 2018, AN ESTIMATED **4,356** SYNTHETIC TURF FIELDS WILL NEED TO BE REPLACED.

THE TURF IS INCINERATED TO PRODUCE ELECTRICITY OR STEAM.

TO

**ENERGY**



HOWEVER... THIS PROCESS PRODUCES **113 TONS** OF eCO<sub>2</sub>

**3**



THE FIELD IS CAREFULLY REMOVED AND REUSED SOMEWHERE ELSE, LIKE A BATTING CAGE.

UNFORTUNATELY, STUDIES SHOW NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES THE FIELD IS REPURPOSED, IT WILL INEVITABLY END UP IN THE LANDFILL.

**4**

**RECYCLE**



BY RECYCLING THE FIELD, IT BECOMES A NEW **RAW MATERIAL** READY TO BE MADE INTO A LIMITLESS NUMBER OF THINGS.

**SO WHY DOESN'T EVERYONE RECYCLE?** THERE ARE VERY FEW FACILITIES THAT CAN RECYCLE TURF. IN ADDITION, THE OLD FIELD MUST BE REMOVED BY SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT AND PROPERLY SEPARATED, OR IT CANNOT BE RECYCLED.

PRESENTED BY



WWW.RECYCLEMYTURF.COM

RECYCLING ALSO SAVES **143** BARRELS OF CRUDE OIL.