

HB 299 - SUPPORT
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HB 299 SUPPORT - Environment – Synthetic Turf – Chain of Custody • February 15, 2023

Dear Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

I share these comments today in **support** of *HB 299- Synthetic Turf - Chain of Custody*, sponsored by Delegates Lehman et al. I am an environmental and human health advocate who has worked on pollution and water quality issues for more than twenty years. In the last ten years, I have guided athletes, sports officials, parents, and community members in making safer personal choices to protect themselves or their family members who must play on synthetic turf. I am also a certified girls lacrosse official and league assigner. I work on this surface because I love my game and I support girls playing sports. But make no mistake, the surface is awful to play on, detrimental to people and our environment, and requires responsible management to deal with the realities of its existence. Ultimately, no one should have to choose between playing sports and playing on synthetic turf.

Disposal Pollution

In 2017, Albemarle County, Virginia, was polluted by the dumping of **more than 200 tons** of discarded synthetic turf fields from a replacement project completed by the University of Virginia. The discarded synthetic turf was rolled up, driven truckload after truckload into rural Albemarle County by a contractor, and dumped on a hillside above a stream.

When nearby residents first noticed it, the landowner had it moved to a more private site, where it was partially buried. When it was found again a few months later, the landowner was cited for an illegal dump, and **the portion of the waste synthetic turf that was recoverable** was taken to a landfill. I have reviewed waste receipts for 199 tons of material for this specific project.



Images courtesy of Virginia DEQ

To be clear, a traditional landfill is NOT an appropriate outcome for contaminated plastic waste and pollutants, but Virginia does not currently have a better mechanism in place with which to handle this mess, nor to record the magnitude of nor method for localities handling waste from synthetic turf replacement projects. **When no information is gathered, citizens are prevented from having a choice to protect their families and important natural resources from damaging pollution.**

Piles of discarded synthetic turf fields are building up on industrial lots, behind businesses, and on country sites away from

prying eyes, across the United States. **Responsible states can do better.**

Routine Daily Pollution

Synthetic turf is **constantly shedding particles**, including crumb rubber or other infills and pieces of the plastic grass “blades” from its matting.

This picture is of my bag and shoes after working a lacrosse game on synthetic turf in April 2022 in central Virginia. All of my personal items, and most of my body, was coated with shreds of plastic, crumb rubber, and toxic dust as I left the field.

This **endocrine-disrupting pollution** is left like a trail of breadcrumbs when players and personnel depart the field, get in their cars, and return to their homes. Please imagine the amount that falls from and blows out of trucks along roadways, sidewalks, and into drainage ditches to waterways as hundreds of tons of deteriorating synthetic carpet and loose crumb rubber infill waste is transported to some destination for dumping.



Synthetic turf is an **ecological nightmare** that keeps on giving in every community in which it is installed or dumped. **Forever chemicals remain damaging for generations**, causing chronic diseases, birth defects, and longterm environmental and wildlife damage. Infills containing heavy metals and various cancer-causing substances easily wash away in heavy rains, with potential to threaten streams, rivers, and drinking water far from their original location.

Progress in Maryland

With HB 299, the State of Maryland has a great opportunity to **serve citizens, communities, and environmental health** by providing **transparent** information about synthetic turf application, transportation, and fate.

Holding producers, installers, owners, and transporters of synthetic turf products properly to account for the full life cycle of these products **places the burden appropriately onto the entities who make money from the product**. Extended producer responsibility is the logical way that manufacturing should account to communities in a reasonable society. At a bare minimum, citizens deserve transparent information. With bills like HB 299, you can track, discourage, and ultimately prevent irresponsible dumping happening in your communities.

Maryland can do this! HB 299 will help corporate actors and manufacturers to fulfill their promises to provide more reliable information. HB 299 will help school systems and municipalities to assess and verify that they are choosing upstanding and accountable vendors. HB 299 will help buyers, owners, and decision makers to avoid improper handling of materials in their districts, which can cause significant embarrassment along with human and environmental consequences.

HB 299 is a good choice for Maryland.

Thank you for your consideration. **Please support HB 299 for transparency and chain of custody for synthetic turf.**

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