



HoCoClimateAction.org
Howard County, Maryland

HB1147: Environment - Playground Surfacing Materials - Prohibitions

Hearing Date: March 26, 2024

Bill Sponsor: Delegates Guyton, Lehman, Allen, Ebersole, Forbes, Holmes, Pasteur, Ruth, and Stein

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Submitting Organization: HoCo Climate Action by Liz Feighner

Position: Favorable

[HoCo Climate Action](#) is a [350.org](#) local chapter and a grassroots organization representing approximately 1,400 subscribers. It is also a member of the [Climate Justice Wing](#) of the [Maryland Legislative Coalition](#). **We urge support of HB1147 as amended by the House**, Playground Surfacing Materials - Prohibitions, which will reduce children's harmful exposure to toxins by establishing clear toxicity standards on three dangerous chemicals in playground materials: Lead and PFAS.

The plastic crisis is a climate crisis as well as an environmental justice and public health crisis. Our members have worked with several organizations in Howard County to advocate for reducing single-use plastics through two successful bills, [Plastic Bag Fee](#) and [Plastic Reduction Law](#). We also co-hosted a [webinar on the Story of Plastics in 2020](#). As we highlighted during the discussion, fracking, plastics production, litter, and disposal in landfills and by incineration harm communities of color disproportionately. We believe that social justice, racial justice and environmental justice are all part of a single, globally connected Movement for Justice.

While our work concentrates on the climate crisis and reducing climate pollution fossil fuel use, we are extremely concerned about any plastic (including synthetic materials) in our environment. In fact, "[Researchers from Sweden's KTH Royal Institute of Technology](#) have [unveiled findings](#) that illuminate a "vicious circle" between plastic pollution and global heating, where each phenomenon exacerbates the other. The comprehensive study sheds light on the mutually reinforcing relationship that not only escalates global heating and plastic waste but also contributes to the degradation of materials and the leaching of harmful chemicals into the biosphere"

There has been a growing movement to install playground spaces that include the use of synthetic surfacing materials, which in some cases (e.g., synthetic turf and tire crumb/rubber) contain chemicals known to be hazardous. Maryland has no statewide inventory of playgrounds that documents their surface material composition, so we have no idea on how large the problem is for our childrens.

When a child walks, runs, or falls on a surface an invisible cloud of dust from the surface surrounds them. In the case of rubber and plastic play surfaces, this dust cloud is a mixture of plastic, tire and other particles that have fallen to the surface. Children, and especially younger children, are uniquely vulnerable to the health effects of toxic environmental exposures through ingestion, inhalation or skin contact. Children also [breathe faster](#) per pound of body weight increasing the likelihood of inhalation exposure.

Today there is [undeniable proof](#), including from the [premier research institutions on children's environmental health](#), that tires contain multiple [toxic chemicals](#), all acting together on each child who visits a playground: carcinogens, heavy metals and endocrine disruptors, in addition to microplastic contamination. It is important to note that while the two chemicals, lead and/or PFAS, proposed in this bill can be measured separately, a child's exposure is cumulative, and synergistic.

Materials with high levels of lead and/or PFAS are unacceptable for use on playgrounds.

As the national leaders in epidemiology and pediatrics of the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai concluded, **“given the hazards associated with recycled tire rubber, it is our recommendation that [these products never be used](#) as surfaces where children play.”**

There is no need to put our children at risk, when natural engineered wood fiber is a safe substitute that is ADA compliant. The state of Maryland needs to protect our precious children along with our waterways and our beloved Chesapeake Bay from these highly toxic and dangerous chemicals and this bill will begin to accomplish this goal.

We urge a favorable report for HB1147 as amended by the House.

Submitted for [HoCo Climate Action](#)

by Liz Feighner

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