

House Committee on Environment & Transportation

Hearing on HB1147 / 28 February 2024

I strongly support the bill HB1147 “Playground Surfacing Materials – Prohibitions”. As a mother of two young daughters living in Maryland, I urge you to pass HB1147 to ensure the safety of the playgrounds.

HB1147 prohibits PFAS (Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), PAHs (Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons) and lead from products, materials or substances used or installed on the ground surface of a playground, including shredded tire mulch and bonded rubber surface materials. PFAS, aka the Forever Chemical, can cause damage to the liver and immune system and are linked to cancer. PAHs are also linked to cancer and affect the eyes, kidneys, and liver. Chemicals and microplastics are known to wash off these surfaces and into the oceans, food chain, and drinking water.

The American Academy of Pediatrics states that even low levels of lead in blood have been shown to affect IQ, ability to pay attention, and academic achievement.¹

Researchers at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell’s Toxic Use Reduction Institute, report that there is enough information for them to recommend that municipalities stay away from rubberized playground surfaces.²

Lead testing results from four playgrounds in D.C. presented by the Ecology Center showed a wide range of lead levels in the rubber shred, also known as crumb rubber, ranging from non-detect to thousands of ppm.³ As a results of these findings, the City of Washington, D.C. performed additional testing in 2019 through a private laboratory and closed three playgrounds.⁴

Due to increased awareness about the toxic materials used in playgrounds, Montgomery Parks conducted specialized testing to assess lead levels in rubberized play surfaces and found elevated levels of lead in the rubber materials in four playgrounds in 2020.⁵ Prince George’s County followed with their testing of the playgrounds and found elevated levels of lead.⁶

Do children in other counties need to rely on their local governments to start testing lead in their playgrounds, or can we rely on you to pass this bill to ensure the safety of all playgrounds in Maryland?

Please pass this bill for the safety of all the children in Maryland.

Elisabeth Fidler

Resident of Montgomery County

1. AAP <https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/lead-exposure/>
2. <https://www.eenews.net/articles/toxic-chemicals-lurk-at-childrens-playgrounds/>;
<https://www.turi.org/content/download/11986/188696/file/TURI+Report+2018-003.+Playground+Surfacing.pdf>
3. Ecology Center <https://www.ecocenter.org/playgrounds-should-be-fun-and-toxic-free>
4. DC Government Press Release <https://preview-together.dc.gov/release/three-playgrounds-closed-further-lead-safety-testing>
5. Montgomery Parks <https://montgomeryparks.org/montgomery-parks-completes-lead-testing-of-rubberized-surfaces-in-playgrounds/>
6. https://www.pgiparks.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Leadtestingupdate3-8-21_202103081419371707.pdf