



[HB1147](#): Environment - Playground Surfacing Materials - Prohibitions

Hearing Date: February 28, 2024

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

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Submitting Organization: **Less Plastic Please** by Liz Feighner

Position: Favorable

[Less Plastic Please](#) is a Howard County based grassroots organization representing more than 200 subscribers. We are also a partner of the [Zero Waste Team](#) of [Howard County Sierra Club](#) and a [Beyond Plastics](#) Affiliate. **We urge support of HB1147**, 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, PAHs and PFAS.

Reducing the production of plastics and creating a zero-waste economy is one of our top concerns. Less Plastic Please spearheaded campaigns 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 hosted a [webinar on the Story of Plastics in 2020](#). As we highlighted during the discussion, plastic pollution is an environmental justice and public health crisis: 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 single use plastic, we are extremely concerned about any plastic (including synthetic materials) in our environment. 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.

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. 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.

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 three chemicals, lead, PAHs 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, PAHs 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.**”

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.

Submitted for [Less Plastic Please](#)
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