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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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HB 321 – Synthetic Turf Industry and Disposal Study – Deadline Extension

FAVORABLE

GOOD AFTERNOON, CHAIR KORMAN, VICE CHAIR GUYTON, AND ESTEEMED MEMBERS OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE.

FOR THE RECORD I AM DELEGATE MARY LEHMAN AND I AM HERE TO URGE A FAVORABLE REPORT ON HB321.

HB321 EXTENDS THE DEADLINE FOR THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT (MDE) TO CONDUCT A STUDY AND REPORT BACK TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE SYNTHETIC TURF INDUSTRY'S PRACTICES AND GUIDELINES ON SALES, MAINTENANCE, REUSE AND DISPOSAL OF SYNTHETIC TURF FIELDS. THE UPDATED DEADLINE WOULD BE JANUARY 15, 2027. THIS NEW DEADLINE WOULD PROVIDE MDE AND ITS CONSULTANT AN EXTRA SIX MONTHS TO ENSURE A HIGH QUALITY AND COMPREHENSIVE REPORT, WHICH WOULD BENEFIT OUR STATE AND ITS RESIDENTS.

THE 2024 LAW THAT I SPONSORED REQUIRED MDE TO SUBMIT A REPORT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE REMOVAL AND DISPOSAL OF SYNTHETIC FIELDS IN MARYLAND BY JULY 1, 2026. THE BILL DIRECTED MDE TO INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING IN THE REPORT:

- INDUSTRY INFORMATION AND BACKGROUND;
- METHODOLOGIES USED FOR DATA COLLECTION, INCLUDING PUBLIC HEARINGS AND OTHER PUBLIC OUTREACH;
- CURRENT INDUSTRY PRACTICES AND GUIDELINES RELATING TO THE SALE, MAINTENANCE, REUSE, AND DISPOSAL OF SYNTHETIC TURF;
- CURRENT INDUSTRY DISPOSAL METHODS OF SYNTHETIC TURF, INCLUDING KNOWN DISPOSAL LOCATIONS;
- PROPER AND IMPROPER DISPOSAL METHODS OF SYNTHETIC TURF;

- CURRENT RECYCLING RATES AND METHODS FOR SYNTHETIC TURF AND FUTURE RECYCLING PROPOSALS;
- FACTORS INFLUENCING DISPOSAL AND RECYCLING;
- CASE STUDIES AND EXAMPLES; AND
- PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVING RECYCLING RATES AND WASTE MANAGEMENT.

I PUT FORWARD THIS BILL BECAUSE LAST FALL, MDE REPRESENTATIVES PROVIDED ME WITH AN UPDATE ON THE REPORT AND THE AGENCY HAD NOT MADE MEANINGFUL PROGRESS DESPITE EXTENSIVE RESEARCH ON THE NUMBER, LOCATION, AND OWNERSHIP OF SYNTHETIC TURF FIELDS IN MARYLAND CONDUCTED BY THE SIERRA CLUB. (THE SIERRA CLUB IDENTIFIED MORE THAN 400 SYNTHETIC TURF FIELDS STATEWIDE.)

AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES ASKED FOR AN ADDITIONAL YEAR TO COMPLETE THE REPORT. I DECIDED A SIX-MONTH EXTENSION WAS MORE REASONABLE. AT SOME POINT AFTER THE CONVERSATION, SECRETARY MCILWAIN DECIDED THE REPORT COULD BE DONE BY JULY 1, 2026, AND SAID SO PUBLICLY BEFORE THIS COMMITTEE A FEW WEEKS AGO. I AM CONCERNED ABOUT THE QUALITY OF A REPORT DELIVERED THIS JULY GIVEN HOW FAR BEHIND THE AGENCY SEEMS ON RESEARCH AND INFORMATION GATHERING. I WOULD PREFER THAT IT TAKE AN ADDITIONAL SIX MONTHS TO DELIVER A MORE THOROUGH AND MEANINGFUL WORK PRODUCT.

NO OTHER STATE IS DOING THIS KIND OF COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND REPORTING ON THE DISPOSAL OF SYNTHETIC TURF FIELDS. THE FINDINGS ARE IMPORTANT FOR SHAPING MORE ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE POLICIES REGARDING TURF DISPOSAL IN MARYLAND AND WOULD LIKELY BE USED BY OTHER STATES.

FOR THESE REASONS, I RESPECTFULLY ASK FOR A FAVORABLE REPORT ON HB321.

THE AVERAGE LIFESPAN OF AN ARTIFICIAL TURF FIELD IS EIGHT YEARS, AT WHICH POINT THEY MUST BE REMOVED AND REPLACED.