

TESTIMONY FOR HB 131

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Lehman

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Organization Submitting: Lower Shore Progressive Caucus

Person Submitting: Sam Harvey

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB 131 on behalf of the Lower Shore Progressive Caucus. The Caucus is a political and activist organization on the Eastern Shore, unaffiliated with any political party, committed to empowering working people by building a Progressive Movement.

Caucus members listen for concerns voiced by their environmental partners, and strive to keep a watchful eye out for environmental risks that might exist in the Maryland communities – especially when residents could be unaware that those risks might lie right underneath their children’s feet.

Synthetic turf, and the various materials that are used for synthetic turf infill, have for some years been a source of concern for parents of young athletes, and athletes themselves, who play on synthetic fields.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Toxicology Program, has focused on Tire Crumb Rubber infill in particular. A 2015 study did identify certain potentially dangerous chemicals used in tire manufacture, which can leach out under high temperatures. These include polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and zinc oxide, which can contain traces of heavy metals (lead, cadmium oxide).

Other testing has show the presence of highly fluorinated chemicals – Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) – in both the grass-like blades and backing of synthetic turf. PFAS break down slowly, and have been known to concentrate in humans, animals, and the environment.

According to the EPA, the human health effects of this build-up of PFAS needs more study, especially to consider the effects of low levels of exposure. However, high levels of exposure are clearly harmful in many ways. Similarly, the National Toxicology Program’s study didn’t find an increased health concern associated with the Tire Crumb Rubber chemicals (which can puff up into the air and be inhaled) – but found that risk assessment of exposure to PAHs is still needed.

HB 131 would create a chain of custody – a way to track synthetic turf and infill from its manufacture, through its use on the play fields, unto its disposal at the end of its effective life. This chain of custody

would need to be documented with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), or producers would incur a warning, and then monetary fines for continued failure to provide that documentation.

Producers of synthetic fields already in place, and installed for the remainder of 2022, would have some leeway in this documentation, as far as where these products ended up, or their final disposal. However, starting January 1, 2023, producers would need to have a system in place to track these materials through their entire lifespans.

Given the fact that we are still studying these play field materials, and have not definitively ruled out associated negative health effects, it seems only prudent to track synthetic turf and infill until we have those answers. For this reason, the Lower Shore Progressive Caucus supports this bill and recommends a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.