

HB 131 - SUPPORT  
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HB 131 SUPPORT - Environment – Synthetic Turf and Turf Infill – Chain of Custody  
January 19, 2022

Dear Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

I share these comments today in **support** of *HB 131- Synthetic Turf and Turf Infill - Chain of Custody*, Sponsored by Delegate Lehman. I am an environmental and human health advocate who has worked on pollution and water quality issues for twenty years. In the last ten years, I have guided countless athletes, and their parents, in making healthy choices to protect themselves when they must play on synthetic turf.

In 2017, Albemarle County, Virginia, where I live, was polluted by the dumping of **more than 200 tons of discarded synthetic turf fields** from a replacement project completed by the University of Virginia. The discarded synthetic turf was rolled up, driven truckload after truckload into rural Albemarle County by a contractor, and dumped on a hillside.

When regulators first noticed it, the landowner had it moved to another more private site, where it was partially buried. When it was found again a few months later, the landowner was cited, and **the portion of the waste synthetic turf that was recoverable** was taken to a landfill. 199 tons of it.

To be clear, a traditional landfill is NOT an appropriate outcome for contaminated plastic waste and pollutants, but Virginia did not have a better mechanism in place with which to handle this mess.



There was no law in place in Virginia to provide information. Finding this dump was by accident and still many citizens have no idea.

These pictures show bits and pieces that were discovered. Piles of discarded synthetic turf fields are building up on industrial lots, behind businesses, and on country sites away from prying eyes, across the United States.

To those who point to recycling synthetic turf as an option: reusing toxic and carcinogenic substances guarantees additional exposure and damage, kicking the pollution can down the road.



Images courtesy of Virginia Department of Environmental Quality

With HB 131, the State of Maryland has a great opportunity to **serve citizens, communities, and environmental health** by providing **transparent** information about synthetic turf application, transportation, and fate.

Holding producers, installers, owners, and transporters of synthetic turf products properly to account for the full life cycle of these products **places the burden appropriately onto the people who make money from the product**. Extended producer responsibility is the logical way that manufacturing should account to communities in a reasonable society. At a bare minimum, citizens deserve transparent information. And you can discourage, and ultimately prevent, this dumping happening in your community.

Synthetic turf leaches polluting components into our ground and surface water and into the air. Some of these pollutants, like PFAS and other forever chemicals in the plastic grass blades, do not degrade and cannot be easily recovered. **Forever chemicals remain damaging for generations, causing chronic disease, birth defects, and longterm environmental and wildlife damage**. Infills containing heavy metals and various cancer-causing substances easily wash away in heavy rains, with potential to threaten streams, rivers, and drinking water far from their original location.

**Maryland can do better.** HB 131 will help corporate actors and manufacturers to fulfill their promises to provide more reliable information. HB 131 will help school systems and municipalities to assess and verify that they are choosing upstanding and accountable vendors. HB 131 will help buyers, owners, and decision makers, including elected officials, to avoid improper handling of materials in their districts, which can cause significant embarrassment along with human and environmental consequences.

HB 131 is a good choice for Maryland.

Thank you for your consideration. **Please support HB 131 for transparency and chain of custody for synthetic turf.**

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For additional information about our experience in Albemarle County, please see:

**Hidden gotcha in artificial turf installations** by Pete Myers - Dec 04, 2019  
[ehn.org/hidden-gotcha-in-artificial-turf-installations-2641507579.html](http://ehn.org/hidden-gotcha-in-artificial-turf-installations-2641507579.html)