



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

www.womensdemocraticclub.org

House Bill HB0131
Environment – Synthetic Turf and Turf Infill – Chain of Custody
House Environment and Transportation Committee – January 19, 2022
SUPPORT

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

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2022 legislative session. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic Clubs in our County with hundreds of politically active women and men, including many elected officials.

WDC is in full support of HB131, requiring a chain of custody for synthetic turf fields and infill in Maryland. This bill is a common-sense solution to an increasingly urgent problem, namely the responsible management of the materials in synthetic turf fields and infill. The sole requirement of the bill is for the producer of a plastic field, as defined in the bill, to alert the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) whenever the field is moved. MDE then posts the information. Nothing further is required unless the field is moved again, at which point the same reporting and posting is to take place.

This bill is about **transparency**; it is **not punitive** in intent or effect, to responsible producers of synthetic turf fields. The enactment of HB131 will create a simple but effective tool for verifying that used synthetic turf fields are not improperly disposed of upon being moved.

There is nothing new or remarkable about legislation geared to protect public health, and our shared environment. There is nothing new or remarkable about a reporting requirement on a product. In the case of synthetic fields, there are three aspects that clearly fall within the public health/environmental protection values:

- **Toxicity:** We have known for decades that many components of synthetic turf fields are toxic – in both the carpet and infill: heavy metals, carcinogens, endocrine disruptors, PFAS (“forever chemicals”) and more. In addition to being toxic individually, these are present in largely unstudied and undisclosed combinations.
- **Microplastics:** The alarming rate of microplastic pollution globally puts a premium on prevention versus clean-up. By preventing improper disposal of synthetic turf carpet and infill, HB131 helps curb the microplastic load to which we and our environment are exposed.
- **Volume:** A single plastic field with infill amounts to some 250+ tons of mixed plastics and other materials. The industry puts the ‘useful’ life of a field at 8-10 years. Since the original AstroDome field in 1966, there have been tens of thousands of synturfs installed in the U.S., then removed, and then replaced (The cost of returning to a grass field after a synturf is prohibitive for all but professional/elite venues). Where have they gone? It is a question that deserves an answer, at least going forward.



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It is the responsibility of our government to secure the health and welfare of Marylanders. Weighed against a simple reporting requirement, public health and environmental protection must prevail. HB131 protects Marylanders from irresponsible behavior related to movement of these fields.

In addition, the responsible producers can proudly tell their customers that they comply with the standards for transparency and accountability at each step of a field's life. Such claims are a positive selling point in today's market. It also assures buyers they won't be embarrassed when a dumped field is traced to their school, park, etc.

Accordingly, we ask for your favorable vote to guide the synthetic turf industry to responsible management of their products.

We urge a favorable report for HB131.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our views.

Respectfully,

Leslie Milano
President