

HB 131 - SUPPORT
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HB 131 SUPPORT - Environment – Synthetic Turf and Turf Infill – Chain of Custody

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

On behalf of Sugarloaf Citizens' Association, I submit this testimony in support of House Bill 131. We are a citizens' advocacy group based in the Agricultural Reserve of Montgomery County. Our mission is to protect and preserve both the agricultural economy and the natural resources that make up this 93,000-acre part of Montgomery County. Although the work we do primarily focuses on this geographic jurisdiction, the effects of misuse of this area have wide ranging consequences throughout the entire county and beyond. For example, we have fought hard to protect Ten-Mile Creek and the Little Seneca Reservoir, the backup water supply for the entire metropolitan region. Assuring compliance with the zoning of the area has prevented the inappropriate development of land that could compromise this water supply. Similarly, we have been working closely with the County's Department of Environmental Protection to mitigate the toxic effects of incinerating our county's trash.

One of the issues that we have had to fight numerous times is that illegal dumping of toxic or hazardous materials on farmland or in out of the way fields and woodland areas. The Agricultural Reserve is a remarkable example of visionary planning. It has kept farming vibrant and economically feasible near a major metropolitan area and has provided a green lung to the whole region in the form of open space, forests, and a network of clean water systems.

A challenge, however, to having large tracts of land that are not continuously monitored is that they are occasionally abused or used for inappropriate and hazardous purposes. When a contractor or business has no responsibility to provide transparency in how his construction debris or other waste products are handled, there is often temptation to find a solution that is the least cost to him but with enormous consequences to the community that receives it. This is our concern with synthetic turf when it reaches the end of its life span. There is such a large volume of difficult to process material that has the potential for large-scale pollution, it only makes sense that the manufacturer of such materials must take responsibility for that product throughout its lifespan. We know that there is no easy disposal solution for this product but there are legal and acceptable ways to minimize its harmful effects. House Bill 131 will assure that these legal channels of disposal will be followed.

Please pass this very common-sense bill that simply assures that a potentially polluting and hazardous material is handled as safely as possible throughout its lifespan. We urge a favorable report on HB131.

Sincerely,



Steven Findlay, President
Sugarloaf Citizens' Association