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Committee: Education, Energy and Environment
Testimony: HB299 Environment – Synthetic Turf - Chain of Custody
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: March 23, 2023

I am a Marylander who has resided in Baltimore County for about 28 years and support HB299 Environment - Synthetic Turf - Chain of Custody.

According to data compiled by the Sierra Club, my county has more synthetic turf fields than any other in the state with over 60 fields at 45 different sites across the county. There are about 440,000 pounds of waste associated with each field, which typically includes tire crumb, plastic grass, and backing, which means that my county alone can generate over 26 million pounds of waste every 8-10 years from synthetic turf. It's worth noting that Baltimore County has a single landfill that is expected to reach capacity in 2025.

Further, these synthetic turf fields are frequently dumped on private property as occurred in White March, Maryland with a field transported from Montgomery County. The tire crumb was all over the place with absolutely no containment in an area near the watershed that had recently had expensive remediation.

The tire material frequently used in the synthetic turf fields contains a toxic brew of hazardous chemicals that would classify them as hazardous waste if they were to be landfilled as tires, but once ground up on a field are permitted to be disposed of with no oversight. According to Mount Sinai Children's Environmental Health Center, the "major chemical components of recycled rubber are styrene and butadiene, the principal ingredients of the synthetic rubber used for tires in the United States. Styrene is neurotoxic and reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen. Butadiene is a proven human carcinogen that has been shown to cause leukemia and lymphoma. Shredded and crumb rubber also contain lead, cadmium, and other metals known to damage the developing nervous system." ¹

In addition to these chemicals, University of Notre Dame research led by Dr. Graham Peaslee has found PFAS in the grass, backing, and tire crumb of synthetic turf. These chemicals leach from the materials from the first rainfall after installation and continue leaching indefinitely, polluting the ground wherever they go. ²

As about one in seven Marylanders rely on wells for their water, this could present significant contamination issues for homeowners throughout our state. I am a homeowner that relies on well water. Improper disposal could also contaminate our watersheds and impact spawning grounds for our fish and adversely impact other wildlife.

It's important to also consider that many of the health impacts from exposure to toxins take years to develop. The connections between lead paint and leaded gas and the adverse impact on the mortality and intellectual and behavioral development on children took years, as did exposure to asbestos and the many now known cancers. In fact, the world-renowned Dr. Philip Landrigan, whose research led to the banning of lead in paint and gas, and further limits on asbestos, has raised and shared concerns regarding synthetic turf.

These fields come with abundant health and safety concerns that I hope legislators address in future legislation, but we should at least start with addressing tracking and disposal of these toxic fields. The state should know where this hazardous waste lies so we can better understand the environmental impact. Whatever the cost for these fields, the damage to the environment will be considerably more. Marylanders and our environment should be protected from the careless disposal of this dangerous waste.

I urge you to provide a favorable report for HB299 Synthetic Turf Chain of Custody.

Sincerely,

Marie LaPorte

¹ Testimony Before Connecticut General Assembly Committee on Children, February 16, 2016. Dr. Sarah Evans, <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2016/KIDdata/Tmy/2016HB-05139-R000216-Sarah%20Evans,%20Icahn%20School%20of%20Medicine%20at%20Mount%20Sinai-TMY.PDF>. Sinai Children's Environmental Health Center, <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2016/KIDdata/Tmy/2016HB-05139-R000216-Sarah%20Evans,%20Icahn%20School%20of%20Medicine%20at%20Mount%20Sinai-TMY.PDF>

² ² *The Intercept*, Toxic Chemicals Found in Artificial Turf, October 8, 2019, <https://theintercept.com/2019/10/08/pfas-chemicals-artificial-turf-soccer/>