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Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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HB 299 – ENVIRONMENT – SYNTHETIC TURF– CHAIN OF CUSTODY

SUPPORT

GOOD MORNING MR. CHAIRMAN, MR. VICE CHAIR AND COLLEAGUES. I AM HERE TO REQUEST FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION OF HB 299, A BILL CREATING A CHAIN OF CUSTODY REPORTING SYSTEM FOR SYNTHETIC TURF PLAYING FIELDS.

THIS IS MY FIFTH YEAR WORKING ON LEGISLATION THAT WILL DETERMINE WHERE TURF PLAYING FIELDS GO WHENEVER THEY ARE MOVED; MOST OFTEN THIS WILL BE AT THE END OF THE LIFE OF A FIELD. THAT IS TYPICALLY WHEN THEY ARE 8-10 YEARS OLD. THE COMMITTEE PASSED THE BILL AMENDED IN 2022 AND IT PASSED THE FULL HOUSE. THE SENATE EHEA COMMITTEE NEVER VOTED ON THE HOUSE BILL OR THE SENATE CROSS-FILE.

HB 299 REQUIRES OWNERS AND MANUFACTURERS OF SYNTHETIC TURF FIELDS, WHICH INCLUDE THE PLASTIC CARPETING, INFILL MATERIAL AND SHOCK PAD, TO REPORT TRACKING INFORMATION TO THE MD DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENT FOR PUBLICATION ON ITS WEB SITE. INITIALLY, THIS WILL MEAN THAT OWNERS WILL REPORT WHERE FIELDS ARE ALREADY INSTALLED. THIS WILL INCLUDE STREET

ADDRESS AND LOCATION OF THE FIELD, CUSTODIAN OF THE FIELD, BRAND OF FIELD, SIZE IN SQUARE FEET AND WEIGHT, AND THE DATE IT WAS INSTALLED.

A GROUP OF DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS HAS CONDUCTED A TURF INVENTORY ACROSS THE STATE OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS. THE INFORMATION WAS NOT EASY TO OBTAIN AND DOES NOT GIVE AN ENTIRELY COMPLETE PICTURE OF TURF PLAYING FIELDS IN MARYLAND, BUT WE KNOW OF ABOUT 400. THE REPORTING REQUIRED IN HB 299 WILL CLARIFY THAT NUMBER.

IF THE SYNTHETIC TURF FIELD IS REMOVED AFTER THE CHAIN OF CUSTODY INFORMATION IS ESTABLISHED, THE NEW CUSTODIAN WILL REPORT TO MDE THE NEW LOCATION AND STREET ADDRESS, NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION OF THE TRANSPORTER, THE SIZE AND WEIGHT OF THE FIELD, AND HOW IT IS BEING USED AT THE NEW LOCATION, WHETHER THAT'S RECYCLED, PROCESSED FOR DISPOSAL, OR USED TO REPLACE ANOTHER PLAYING FIELD.

THIS BILL IS ESTABLISHING A TRANSPARENT REPORTING SYSTEM AROUND THE MOVEMENT AND DISPOSAL OF SYNTHETIC TURF FIELDS, WHICH POSE AN ENORMOUS SOLID WASTE CHALLENGE. BY FINDING OUT WHERE THESE FIELDS ARE NOW AND WHERE THEY GO AT THE END (AND OCCASIONALLY IN THE MIDDLE) OF THEIR LIVES, THERE WILL BE GREATER PUBLIC INFORMATION AND AWARENESS THAT HOPEFULLY WILL LEAD TO INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES FOR REUSE, RECYCLING, REPURPOSING AND RESPONSIBLE DISPOSAL.

AMENDMENTS: THERE ARE FOUR FRIENDLY AMENDMENTS THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED. THREE OF THE CHANGES WERE REQUESTED BY THE MD ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES ON BEHALF OF ITS RECREATION MEMBERS. THEY ARE MOSTLY CLARIFYING AMENDMENTS AND ALLOW FLEXIBILITY AROUND THE WEIGHT OF FIELDS ALREADY IN THE GROUND. THERE WAS A SINGLE AMENDMENT REQUEST FROM MDE ASKING THAT PENALTIES BE ADMINISTRATIVE RATHER THAN CIVIL AS CALLED FOR IN THE BILL.

MR. CHAIRMAN, I BELIEVE A CHAIN OF CUSTODY APPROACH IS A WORKABLE POLICY FOR BOTH SYNTHETIC TURF FIELD OWNERS AND MANUFACTURERS. IT REPRESENTS ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY AROUND WHERE SYNTHETIC TURF PLAYING FIELDS EXIST WITHIN THE STATE'S BOUNDARIES DURING ANY PHASE OF THEIR LIFE CYCLE. THANK YOU AND I URGE A FAVORABLE REPORT.

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