

HB1147 - SUPPORT

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HB1147 SUPPORT - Environment – Playground Surfacing Materials - Prohibitions

Hearing: Feb 28th, 2024

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

I strongly support HB1147 which would prohibit, on or after October 1, 2024, a person from using, supplying, selling, soliciting, or offering for sale playground surfacing materials that contain certain concentrations of PAH, PFAS, or lead for the construction or renovation of the ground surface of a playground in the State; and prohibit a county, municipality, or unit of local government from adopting any ordinance, rule or regulation related to certain playground surfacing materials that is less stringent than the requirement of the Act, etc.

I would like to thank the sponsors for introducing this important bill and understanding the need for there to be greater regulation in this area. I support the testimony submitted by Safe Healthy Playing Fields and the Maryland Sierra Club. As an environmental advocate, former pediatric occupational therapist, and current volunteer at a program with young children, I am very aware of the variety of issues and considerations required for play surfacing.

Children learn through play and their sensory environment – including through touch. It is our job as parents, professionals, and legislators to ensure that what they are touching and playing on is safe. Synthetic play surfacing, which can contain PAHs, PFAS, lead, has often been sold as a solution to accessibility, even though other options are available. Covering a playground in tire waste may be one answer for the disposal problem the scrap tire industry faces, and covering a playground in synthetic turf may be the answer for the oil industry looking to sell more plastic - but is it good for our children to be regularly exposed to the toxic chemicals in those unregulated products, or good for the planet when the synthetic surfacing material inevitably breaks down and creates pollution, or good for either our children or the planet when synthetic materials containing these chemicals reach extreme temperatures?

I urge this committee to give HB1147 a favorable report. Thank you for considering my view.

Amanda Farber