



*of the Anacostia River*  
P.O. Box 4314  
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## **Testimony on HB 1547: Synthetic Turf and Turf Infill – Producer Responsibility**

**Lead Sponsor: Delegate Lehman**

**Hearing in the House Economics Matters Committee: 2/19/20 at 1:00 p.m.**

**Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Chairman Davis and members of the Committee:

I submit this testimony in support of HB 1547 on behalf of the Neighbors of the Northwest Branch of the Anacostia River (NNWB), a 501(c)(3) volunteer organization dedicated to the ecological restoration of the Northwest Branch, with over 200 members and supporters in Montgomery and Prince George's counties.

I first want to thank the sponsors of this bill, Delegates Lehman, Acevero, Boyce, Bridges, Carr, Charkoudian, Cullison, Fraser-Higalco, Guyton, R. Lewis, Love, Moon, Pena-Melnyk, Qi, Solomon, Terrassa, Valentino-Smith, and Wilkins, who clearly recognize that disposing of the many artificial turf fields now installed in Maryland presents a major problem for our soil, water, air, and health. The wisest course would be to stop installing them--and to replace failed fields with grass. But at the very least, starting now, disposal of current and future turf fields installed in Maryland must tracked and ultimate disposal of this toxic product done in such a way that it no longer pollutes.

Because of the composite nature of these plastic carpets (polyethylene (PE), polypropylene (PP) and polyurethane (PU), with perhaps a little polyester and nylon) true recycling—turning these plastics into other products or more turf-- is extremely difficult. Add to that the used tire crumb and sand, which must be separated out and the difficulty is obvious. One company in Denmark does it, [Re-match ApS](#), but it is expensive, and little used even in Europe. The owner hopes to expand to the U.S., and in years to come, his process offers perhaps some hope. But right now, as shown graphically by Turf Reclamation Solutions, most worn out synthetic turf is

dumped in landfills—or simply dumped. See <http://www.recyclingartificialturf.com/what-happens-used-turf>. In the California fires, piles of used plastic carpets burned, creating hotter fires and more air pollution than when the turf is incinerated in a waste-to-energy operation with scrubbers. See <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2019/12/artificial-turf-fields-are-piling-no-recycling-fix/603874/>

A search of recycling operations in the U.S. reveals that even businesses claiming to “recycle” turf actually just cut up the still usable pieces and sell them for private yards or batting cages. This is the best case scenario. Eventually, all these pieces must be disposed of. And we are talking about *such huge quantities of material that they overwhelm the demand*. MCPS says 13 schools now have turf fields, two have already been replaced (Blair and Walter Johnson); another required massive doses of crumb rubber infill to remain usable (Richard Montgomery). Bear in mind that each of the fields contains approximately 40,000 pounds of plastic carpet and 400,000 pounds of infill. So just for the public school fields in one Maryland county, not counting the many private school fields and park fields, of which there are many, that’s 675,000 sq. yards of carpet and 5,200,000 pounds of infill to dispose of. During this extended life, the turf continues to degrade to dust containing neurotoxins such as lead, mercury, and carbon black, carcinogens and endocrine disrupters such as phthalates, zinc, toxic to aquatic life, probably some Round-Up applied to control weeds, biocides to control MRSA, and fire retardants.

The current bill HB 1547 will require establishing a chain of custody, either by the owner of the field in the case of fields installed before January 1, 2021, or by the producer of the product for fields installed after that date, with reporting requirements, until the turf’s ultimate disposal.

**Given the harm synthetic turf causes throughout its lifespan, it is only reasonable to track it and require disposal that causes no further danger to our soil, water, air, and health. As watershed protectors and citizens of Maryland, we urge you to report favorably on HB 1547.**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.



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