

Testimony in support of HP 782, LD 1177:

Resolve, Establishing a 3-year Moratorium on the Installation or Reinstallation of Synthetic Turf and Requiring a Study of the Public Health and Environmental Risks of Synthetic Turf

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and distinguished members of the Committee, my name is Jakob de Swaan Arons, I am a junior at Colby College studying Environmental Policy and Economics.

I am writing today to express my wholehearted support for LD1177. Growing up, I almost exclusively played sports on synthetic turf fields. Whether it was soccer practice after school, football during lunch break, or ultimate frisbee on the weekends, black pellets and small pieces of green plastic were a part of my everyday life. Playing on turf, you learn to cope with the disadvantages: a bloody scrape after a slide tackle, or a sprained ankle from a contested jump-ball. However, nothing was as annoying as the never ending stream of plastic and rubber that followed you. After any game you were guaranteed to have your shoes, backpack, underwear, and socks full of black pellets. It was inevitable that changing out of your clothes would lead to a scattering of turf over the floor of your room and in between the hairs of your rug.

Given the constant presence of synthetic turf in my childhood, I was alarmed to learn that these plastics and rubbers are full of harmful compounds such as PFAS, phthalates, and heavy metals¹. The artificial grass blades are only made possible through dangerous plasticizers and flame retardants². Furthermore, the tires that are shredded to create the black pellets contain unsafe levels of known carcinogens and neurotoxins, such as lead, mercury, and cadmium³. Both these pellets and the green plastic contain compounds known to disrupt critical hormone functions affecting the brain, heart, reproductive organs, and more⁴. For the children who predominantly use these fields, the relative effects of these chemicals will be greater due to their smaller bodies and may not be realized for years⁵.

However, there are more disadvantages to synthetic turf than just dangerous health effects. Artificial fields also increase injury risk, create heat islands, and release microplastics into our environment². Case Western Reserve University and the Sports Medicine Institute at the University of Houston found that athletes were 58% more likely to get injured playing on astroturf⁶. I myself tore my left rotator cuff last spring when making a diving catch on a turf field, something that would have never happened on a cushioned grass field.

Thank you for your time, I once again urge you to vote in support of LD1177.

Jakob de Swaan Arons

Sources

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