

Mayor and Council Offices

Mark Dion

Mayor

April 3, 2025



Testimony of Mayor of the City of Portland, Mark Dion

Before

Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

In Opposition to

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

April 3, 2025

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and Members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, I write on behalf of the City of Portland to express our opposition to LD 1177, which would establish a three-year statewide moratorium on the installation or reinstallation of synthetic turf fields.

Portland has made strategic investments in synthetic turf fields to meet the recreational needs of youth sports groups, schools athletics, and adult sports leagues. Given the short growing season in Maine and the high rate of field usage in a city of our size, synthetic turf has allowed us to provide safe, durable, and accessible athletic spaces throughout the year. In contrast, maintaining natural grass fields under these conditions is both cost-prohibitive and environmentally challenging. It often requires the use of significant irrigation, regular mowing, and increased applications of pesticides or fertilizers, practices we seek to minimize in alignment with our environmental goals.

We understand and share the concerns raised about the environmental and health implications of synthetic turf, especially regarding PFAS content and disposal practices. However, a statewide moratorium would be a blunt and disruptive instrument that fails to acknowledge the important role synthetic turf plays in urban recreation and equity. Portland is preparing to replace several of our turf fields in the coming years. Memorial Stadium Turf was replaced in 2019 and is scheduled for next replacement in 2034. Fitzpatrick stadium turf was replaced in 2025 and will not need replacement for 10-15 years. In 2027, we are planning to add a new third artificial turf field at an unconfirmed location. A moratorium would delay that necessary work and reduce access to outdoor recreational opportunities.

Rather than halting all new installations, we would rather see collaboration with municipalities to advance improvements in how synthetic turf is produced, installed, and ultimately recycled. There is clear potential for innovation in this space. Interested parties could help encourage the development and procurement of turf products that minimize or eliminate the use of PFAS and other harmful additives. It could also invest in infrastructure or incentives to support responsible turf recycling and reuse, which remains an unmet need in Maine and across the country.

At the same time, we support efforts to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the comparative environmental impacts of natural grass and synthetic turf. These are complex trade-offs, and we welcome the opportunity to participate in broader discussions around best practices and long-term sustainability. But those conversations should not come at the expense of immediate community needs.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 1177. Portland remains committed to responsible stewardship of both our recreational infrastructure and our shared environment, and we stand ready to work with the Legislature on better, science-based solutions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Dion", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Dion
Mayor
City of Portland, Maine