

Joe Blotnick  
Bernard  
LD 1177

Testimony of Joe Blotnick in SUPPORT of ...

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 members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee,

I am Joe Blotnick, RESIDENT of BERNARD, ME. I have a Master Degree in Environmental Science, from UMass, worked for the UMO Extension Service, and served as Director of the URI Environmental Education Center. Thank you for the work that you do for the state of Maine and for providing me with this opportunity to support LD 1177.

LD 1177 will place a 3-year moratorium on installing or reinstalling artificial (synthetic) turf and require a study of the public health and environmental risks. This is a prudent step in the right direction for Maine.

Based on plenty of scientific evidence, artificial turf, which is made of plastic, contains a large number of hazardous substances, including PFAS (forever chemicals), and phthalates (endocrine disruptors that interfere with the body's hormonal system) and heavy metals including lead, mercury, cadmium and other known carcinogens. Children who play on sports fields or playgrounds with artificial turf are exposed to these toxics through inhalation, absorption through their skin, or even swallowing them.

Microplastics have been detected in virtually every seawater and rainwater sample analyzed - even in remote, unpopulated regions. Increasing numbers of microplastics have also been found in human and animal tissue, food, beverages and in every ecosystem on the planet, from the Antarctic tundra to tropical coral reefs.

Only in the past decade or two has the world and our scientific community begun to explore the impact of microplastics and the toxic chemicals infused with them on our health, especially on children's health. These small plastic particles can accumulate in the body and may be associated with developmental issues, respiratory problems, and other health concerns, including neurodevelopmental problems.

In addition to the direct impact from playing on artificial turf, storm water run-off from artificial turf fields has been found to contain zinc which is poisonous to aquatic life forms.

Many turfs claim to be PFAS-Free but in actuality are only testing for a small subset of PFAS chemicals, not the entire 14000+. Unless they are testing for total organic fluorine, they cannot claim to be PFAS free

It is prudent to question the validity of installing toxic play environments in communities throughout Maine when safer or natural alternatives exist. A cost comparison analysis and projection from Montgomery County in Maryland found that when all of the true costs of artificial turf are accounted for, it can actually cost more.

I urge you to vote unanimously "Ought to Pass" on LD 1177

Thank you,  
Joe Blotnick  
Bernard, ME