

Priscilla Dreyman  
South Portland, Maine  
LD 1177

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudara and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, I am the Reverend Priscilla Dreyman of South Portland, retired minister for environmental concerns at Cape Elizabeth United Methodist Church I am also a certified United Methodist Earthkeeper.

Educator at Bowdoin College, environmentalist, and author, Ayanna Elizabeth Johnson has published a hope-filled book entitled, "What If We Get It Right?" referring to ways we can act to combat climate change.

Today we stand at a crossroads of opportunity for getting it right for our students, our communities, our environment and our climate. We have an opportunity to be a model of the healthiest athletic facilities for our athletes, our band members, their fans, anyone using our fields, as well as an opportunity for protecting our vulnerable environment by using natural grass for our future playing fields. This can be a win-win for everyone.

What if we get it right by preserving, rather than destroying, the topsoil created over thousands of years --soil that absorbs and sequesters carbon pollution and cleans the air we breathe. In preserving topsoil, we are supporting the fragile underground ecosystem that serves to prevent erosion and absorb rainwater runoff. Natural grass does not create microplastics that enter our wastewater, and in our case in South Portland, our fragile Casco Bay, one of the fastest warming bodies of water in the world. Once in Casco Bay, these micro and nano plastics and toxic chemicals from disintegrating plastic grass blades will enter the plantlife and seafood chains, and then the human food chain and seafood industries. What if we get it right by not introducing 40,000 pounds of plastic grass per playing field into the ecosystems and watersheds across Maine? What if we get it right by not putting 300,000 pounds of infill per field to support each rug of plastic turf -- turf that has a 10-year lifespan before needing to be replaced (to the tune of millions of dollars)?

The plastics industry, part of the fossil fuel industry, is polluting rivers, farmland, marshes and bays, most visibly in and along the Mississippi River, the Gulf of Mexico, parts of Ohio and Texas, as a byproduct of making plastics, including artificial turf. Factories are spewing toxic chemicals and plastic particles on nearby communities. 150 petrochemical plants situated along 85 miles of the Mississippi River, are creating a toxic climate for residents. This area is known as "Cancer Alley" due to the high cancer rates reported by residents. And by choosing to use artificial turf in Maine, we are unwittingly complicit in hurting vulnerable families living in these toxic environments. The plastic industry doesn't appear to care. This is environmental injustice.

Communities are being paid to store discarded artificial turf for future recycling. They face the same injustices. Rolls of worn out turf are being stored on farms in Pennsylvania, hidden in warehouses, decomposing in someone else's landfills, or being incinerated. Again people in distant communities are being hurt so that we can have artificial turf now.

What if we get it right by refusing to buy these huge amounts of plastic, in accord with a worldwide call by the United Nations for a moratorium on plastic pollution (the UN Plastics Treaty)? We have a wonderful opportunity to get it right in our precious and priceless state of Maine, as our future playing fields are designed and created sustainably responsibly and collaboratively. Please support LD 1177. Let's give ourselves the time -- three years -- to carefully study the positive and negative aspects of both natural grass and artificial turf. Let's get it right together. Thank you.