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THE MAINE SENATE  
132nd Legislature

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**Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources on  
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 9, 2025**

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and Esteemed Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee: I am Senator Rick Bennett of Oxford, and I have the honor of serving 14 communities in Western Maine in the State Senate. I am proud to cosponsor 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".

In recent years, I've become more and more concerned about the issue of microplastics and their impacts on our health and environment. Recent studies have found microplastics in all areas of the human body. A study in the New England Journal of Medicine found microplastics in the plaque lining the heart of 250 cardiac patients and that the microplastics were associated with heart problems<sup>1</sup>. Other studies have shown that microplastics are showing up in sperm, with studies on mice showing reduced sperm count and abnormalities<sup>2</sup>.

Exposure to microplastics is a real concern for the health of our children. The blades of artificial turf are made of plastic. Even the so-called more environmentally friendly artificial turf uses plastic for the blades. Microplastics slough off of the artificial turf to be inhaled by our kids during play and to also end up in our rivers, soils, and eventually, the ocean. According to Beyond Plastics, "Each synthetic turf field loses 0.5 to 8.0% of its blades annually, yielding 200 to 3,200 pounds of plastic waste to our environment per year." The state of Maine depends greatly on outdoor tourism for our economy. We should not be polluting our beautiful rivers and beaches with microplastics.

It's not just the microplastic aspect of this that is concerning. Many in the industry claim that these fields are recyclable, and they might be if you have the right facilities in place to recycle them, but we don't have these in Maine or in most other states. What usually happens is they end up in landfills. I'm not sure if you've heard but we are experiencing a waste issue here in the state of Maine. We should not be adding to that with acres of artificial turf. Additionally, artificial turf also affects local biodiversity. Unlike natural grass, which helps absorb rainwater and supports a variety of plants and animals, artificial turf

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<sup>1</sup> Marfella, R., Prattichizzo, F., Sardu, C., & Graciotti, L. (2024, March 6). *Microplastics and Nanoplastics in Atheromas and Cardiovascular Events*. The New England Journal of Medicine. <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2413121>

<sup>2</sup> Carrington, D. (2024, June 10). *Microplastics found in every human semen sample tested in study*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/article/2024/jun/10/microplastics-found-in-every-human-semen-sample-tested-in-chinese-study>

creates a sterile environment that does not support local wildlife or aid in water retention. A serious issue as we deal with more storm runoff.

As an avid outdoorsman, I want to make sure that all kids have access to opportunities to play sports and enjoy all the beauty our state has to offer. We can do that without the use of artificial turf that has the very real potential to harm their health and their environment. I urge the committee to support this resolve by voting “ought to pass”. Thank you.

Thank you for your time and consideration today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have. I urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 1177.