

Testimony of Pat Ianni, Falmouth, ME, 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

Before the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

April 9, 2025

I am a resident of Falmouth. In my capacity as an environmental scientist in the area of hazardous waste investigation and site remediation for over three decades, I have studied the research on the manufacture, use, exposure toxicity, and disposal of products containing the expansive list of compounds included in “plastics and PFAS”. Both of these chemical classes are often involved in the manufacture of artificial turf.

Based on my understanding of the risk assessments from exposure to these chemicals, I ask you to consider my testimony **in support** of this Resolve and I urge you to vote **“Ought to Pass” on LD 1177**, which would create a three-year moratorium on the use of new artificial turf and allow a study of the risks.

Others have already submitted testimony in support of this bill which has provided you with the references for the many scientific studies documenting the known toxic chemicals included in artificial turf products and the harmful cumulative impacts to both human health and environmental receptors caused by these products during the manufacture, use, and ultimately, the disposal (i.e., “cradle to grave”). Thus, I will not re-state those harms.

As you have also heard today, the so-called benefits of these synthetic turf fields are often asserted by the manufacturers and retailers regarding the short-term benefits or conveniences offered by these products. However, many of these products pose long-term, cumulative, adverse environmental impacts and human health harms. Often these adverse impacts occur during the manufacture, the use and the disposal of these products. Thus, although there may be some short-term benefits promoted by the manufacturers of artificial turf, the long term “costs” far outweigh the short-term gains.

Additionally, while some may view this as a “local control” issue for individual towns to decide, unfortunately, the use of these synthetic turf fields has impacts to communities far downstream from the “local” school district that has installed these fields. The plastic chemical compounds in turf fields do not stay on the fields and do not just affect those using the fields. These chemicals (via migration of micro particles and leaching of soluble chemical components) migrate off these synthetic turf fields into our soil, surface waters, groundwater, food, drinking water and thus, our bodies. End-of-life disposal of these products also can cause unintended impacts to many individuals who never enjoyed the so-called benefits. Additionally, I might suggest that the claim that “students” enjoy using these fields more than playing on natural grass fields is short-sighted and does not consider the long-term health consequences unknowingly imposed on these students.

We all appreciate the challenging responsibility faced by the Legislature to represent your “district constituents” in the short-term. But it is even more critical to consider the “big picture” in terms of the longer time period when the harms occur (maybe after a Legislator is no longer in office) and the broader geography where the contamination occurs (maybe outside a Legislator’s district). Thus, to benefit all your constituents, one must look at **the long-term impacts** posed to the **broader community** (i.e., the “downstream” humans and other environmental receptors). Therefore, I implore you to please make your decision on this bill by looking to protect the good of the “broader community” over the “longer term”. Short term benefits should never be promoted at the cost of long-term harms (which may not be easily visible today).

Although there may be challenges in transitioning those community fields where these harmful artificial turf fields have already been installed, back to natural grass fields, and there may be challenges in maintaining grass fields, it is critical that we work to slow the installation of new fields and to find ways to return existing synthetic fields to natural grass. Furthermore, the application of pesticides and fertilizers to establish and maintain natural grass fields is never essential and we need to minimize these practices via education and regulations.

In closing – given the many benefits the “Maine outdoors” offers to our citizens and our economy, synthetic turf should never be considered an asset or an “essential use” of these hazardous chemicals especially when natural grass provides a very effective athletic field which has been successfully used for years by students and professional athletes. Thank you for supporting LD 1177.