



# LEWISTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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RE: LD 1177

Hello Maine Delegation,

April 9, 2025

This resolution would Establish 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. There are complexities to moving forward with a moratorium that go beyond the scope of research and therefore, we are opposed to the passing of this bill. As a district, we feel the State of Maine should move forward with a study and then decide on next steps after the results of the study have been determined. A moratorium puts communities with synthetic fields or communities with plans to install a synthetic field in limbo. Putting a 3-year moratorium on synthetic fields creates more issues than the kind of benefit some may perceive.

In Lewiston, our decision to install synthetic fields followed an extensive evaluation that determined this was the best direction to move forward based on the following factors:

- The playing surface of our natural grass fields were sub-par and potentially dangerous
- As a community, our natural grass fields were unable to keep up with the needs of our community
- As a community, we would be able to adjust the synthetic field installed to reduced the health concerns to our participants and environmental concerns to our community
- A synthetic field would reduce our community's dependence on fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides and also help reduce our water usage levels
- Maine just does not have a suitable growing window that would allow our natural grass fields a window to recovery. With Spring sports extending to mid-June and Fall Sports starting in mid-August, we did not have a realistic window for us to grow healthy grass for a playable surface

Since the installation of our synthetic fields, we have noticed the following:

- Extended seasonal usage that has allowed our youth additional months of activity which promotes year-round athletic programming and improved physical activity levels
- An ability to host state, regional and national activities that help bring in an economic benefit to our community in a number of areas
- An ability to assist surrounding communities and college programs when their natural surfaces are unplayable
- A dramatic reduction in weather-related cancellations which has given families a more consistent and reliable schedule to plan family related events
- A growing desire for more community events to hosted on our artificial surface

Finally, when assessing this bill, please consider these additional points:

- Communities like Lewiston with synthetic fields coming up on a replacement date will be put in a difficult position during the moratorium. These synthetic fields could sit in disrepair due to a moratorium which may cause risks to those using the surface.
- We did not see a fiscal note that would fund alternatives for surfaces that shift costs, architectural plans, or accommodate the vast difference between the required sub structures and surrounding structures that are in place or are set to be in place. Cities like Lewiston do not have additional space to use as an alternative. We have multiple turf surfaces used daily well into the night.
- While there are concerns about participation on synthetic fields during hot days, as good stewards, we continually monitor environmental conditions and make adjustments during extreme heat conditions which does include cancelation of activities on the surface should the conditions warrant it
- The synthetic turf industry has continued to make adjustments to their products in attempts to reduce environmental concerns which now include products capable of being recycled or have reduced heavy metals and PFAS levels
- While crumb rubber infill continues to be a point of concern, there are numerous studies that have found crumb rubber to be acceptable for usage in artificial surface

1 – A multiyear, multi agencies study coordinated by the US EPA

A) <https://www.epa.gov/chemical-research/federal-research-recycled-tire-crumb-used-playing-fields-and-playgrounds#Findings>

B) <https://www.epa.gov/chemical-research/tire-crumb-questions-and-answers> - provides reference to other studies

2 – A study was just released in draft form on March 13, 2025 from the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment  
<https://oehha.ca.gov/risk-assessment/synthetic-turf-studies>

3 – Here are 3 additional studies on a global level

A) Netherlands National Institute for Health and Environment wrote that the “risk to health from playing sports on these synthetic turf fields is virtually negligible.”

B) European Chemicals Agency found “no reason to advise people against playing sports on synthetic turf containing recycled rubber granules as infill material.”

C) National Toxicology Program found there “was no evidence of toxicity in mice from ingestion of crumb rubber.”

For these reasons, and others, having a moratorium for 3-years without the necessary data points to drive a transition to other or natural surfaces would be irresponsible. We believe it would have negative impacts economically, socially, and ask communities like ours with high levels of needs to tell the kids - you can't use the fields. We are not opposed to a study being conducted. The health and well-being of our community is important but using fields in disrepair or trying to raise millions to transition to a natural surface while conducting a study is not feasible.

Sincerely,

KJLanglais  
K. Jake Langlais  
Superintendent

Jason Fuller  
Jason Fuller  
Athletic Director

Jake Langlais  
Lewiston Public Schools  
LD 1177  
File attached