



JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



MELANIE LOYZIM
COMMISSIONER

TESTIMONY OF

MELANIE LOYZIM, COMMISSIONER

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

SPEAKING NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST L.D. 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

PRESENTED BY REP. GRAMLICH

BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE

ON

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

DATE OF HEARING:

APRIL 9, 2025

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Committee, I am Melanie Loyzim, Commissioner of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, speaking neither for nor against L.D. 1177.

My daughter plays sports on a synthetic turf field. I find small black bits and short green blades on her bedroom floor that were carried home on her shoes and clothing. I know that a common source of human exposure to chemicals is from household dust and

AUGUSTA
17 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0017
(207) 287-7688 FAX: (207) 287-7826

BANGOR
106 HOGAN ROAD, SUITE 6
BANGOR, MAINE 04401
207-941-4570 FAX: (207) 941-4584

PORTLAND
312 CANCO ROAD
PORTLAND, MAINE 04103
(207) 822-6300 FAX: (207) 822-6303

PRESQUE ISLE
1235 CENTRAL DRIVE, SKYWAY PARK
PRESQUE ISLE, MAINE 04769
(207) 764-0477 FAX: (207) 760-3143

debris. Grass fields, with well-established root systems, filter and biologically transform contaminants (and store carbon), while synthetic materials may leach contaminants into surface and ground water. L.D. 1177 reflects a very logical question about the impact of using synthetic turf on our health and environment. However, the Department suggests that clarification is needed for its implementation and advises the Committee that the work required in this bill cannot be accomplished with existing Department resources.

Section 2 of the bill would not only prohibit installation of new synthetic turf fields, it would also prohibit owners of existing synthetic turf from making repairs involving installation of new material or reinstalling existing material that was removed for the purpose of repairs. The Department does not regulate all circumstances where synthetic turf is installed or reinstalled, and so we do not have information about how often this activity occurs and whether the moratorium proposed in L.D. 1177 could result in safety hazards or the closure of fields that cannot be repaired.

Section 3 of the bill would require the Department to utilize existing research to evaluate the risks of synthetic turf to public health, the environment (presumably referring to ecosystem impacts as distinguished from public health impacts that are due to environmental exposures), and “climate emissions goals” (presumably referring to Maine’s greenhouse gas emission goals in 38 M.R.S. §576-A). L.D. 1177 would also require the Department to conduct at least 3 “public hearings regarding its activities.” The Department suggests that clarification of these requirements would be helpful for implementation.

The Department typically understands a “public hearing” to be an adjudicatory proceeding guided by the Maine Administrative Procedure Act (Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, Chapter 375, Subchapter 4), including procedures for identification of parties, prefiling testimony, and ex parte communication. If the Legislature does not wish for these very formalized procedures governing participation to be followed, the Department recommends revising L.D. 1177 to instead require public “meetings.”

There are existing studies related to synthetic turf that the Department is aware of but has not analyzed. The California Environmental Protection Agency, Office of

Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) recently issued a draft report on the potential health risks associated with the use of synthetic turf fields by athletes, referees, coaches and spectators for public comment until April 28, 2025¹. The draft report states, "Overall, this study found no significant health risks to players, coaches, referees and spectators from on-field or off-field exposure to chemicals in crumb rubber infill from synthetic turf fields based on the assessment method and available data." The Department relies on the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control (CDC) to analyze studies of human health risks from environmental exposures such as these to guide our regulatory and remediation programs. The CDC may be available for work session if the Committee would like to request their preliminary analysis of this California study.

California's study did not include artificial turf blades, which the draft report identifies as the potential source of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) that have been found in connection with synthetic turf in other studies. Maine law prohibits the sale of artificial turf containing intentionally added PFAS beginning January 1, 2029 (38 M.R.S. §1614, sub-5 (B-2)(1)). L.D. 1177 would effectively update that prohibition to 2026 if passed into law.

If the Legislature wishes to require the Department to conduct the study proposed in L.D. 1177, the Department would need additional funding to secure a contractor to perform this work. Contract administration and review of the contractor's work would fall on existing staff.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill. I would be happy to answer any other questions you may have for the Department.

¹ OEHHA Synthetic Turf Study, public review draft. CalEPA. March 2025.
<https://oehha.ca.gov/risk-assessment/report/release-draft-report-synthetic-turf-and-scientific-advisory-panel-meeting>