



Maine Conservation Voters

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Testimony in support of LD1177, *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 distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Cathy Breen. I am the Director of Government Affairs at Maine Conservation Voters (MCV), a statewide non-profit organization with 13,000 members and supporters that is building a just, thriving future for all by acting on the climate crisis, protecting the environment, and safeguarding our democracy. I'm speaking in opposition to **LD1177, *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.***

For many decades, Maine's short falls, long winters and muddy springs left young athletes who participate in outdoor sports like baseball, lacrosse, football, soccer, field hockey and others with few options for outdoor play. Many athletes like me remember the days when grass fields were either closed or filled with mud craters that posed persistent threats to our ankles and knees. When artificial turf moved from the elite and exclusive realm of professional sports to fields and stadiums in public schools, many of us celebrated the fact that athletes now had remarkably more access to "safe" playing surfaces that were less susceptible to seasonal variations.

But now we've learned that these man-made surfaces carry their own risks to athletes' health, and the State of Maine needs to pause the proliferation of these installations and determine the risk/benefit of these products. Synthetic turf contains plasticizers, flame retardants and stabilizers. Shredded waste tires, which are used in these products, contain at least 60 complicated compounds. Small concentrations of these compounds mimic the hormones that regulate bodily functions and the changes they produce may not show up for decades. In addition, these fields can create dangerous heat islands that impact local climate and put children at risk. Artificial turf heats much more quickly than natural grass and can easily rise to dangerous temperatures for children. In one study, researchers found artificial turf reaching 158 degrees Fahrenheit on a sunny day, while an adjacent natural grass field peaked at just over 100 F. The heat radiating from artificial turf causes the temperature to exceed the recommended guideline

by the American Association of Pediatrics far more frequently than natural grass. As summer temperatures in Maine increase due to climate change¹, the risk of dangerous temperatures does as well.

You may hear from proponents of artificial turf that newer iterations of the product are environmentally safe and free of PFAS. However, those newer turfs have merely replaced the infill with safer materials such as cork or coconut. But, the plastic blades are still just that, plastic. Plastic has several toxic chemicals in it and degrades into microplastics that show up in our soil and water.

I hope you will vote Ought to Pass on LD1177. Thank you for your consideration.

¹ https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.future/files/inline-files/STS_2024_digital.pdf