

Testimony of Prentice Grassi, farmer and soccer coach in Freedom Maine

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 Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee

April 9th, 2025

Good morning, Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Prentice Grassi. I am a full time vegetable farmer in Freedom. I am also the father of three student-athletes, two of whom currently attend Mount View High School. I am also the Boys Varsity Assistant Soccer Coach at Mount View. Please accept this testimony in support of LD 1177, which would create a three-year moratorium on the use of new artificial turf.

As a coach, school employee and parent, it is my responsibility to protect the health and well being of both my own children, as well as those who are entrusted to me by their parents. While our own school district does not have any artificial turf surfaces, I have had the experience of coaching our soccer team on several. One only needs to spend time on an artificial turf field to get the sense that there may be concerns. In a new installation, even outdoors, the field smells like a tire factory. We know that those smells represent volatile organic compounds being released. As wonderful as a spritz from a can of WD-40 smells to me, I know that when I smell it, I am ingesting those chemicals into my body. When these fields smell like tires it is because they are made from them. The most cost effective material for artificial turf is known as crumb rubber - made principally from ground up tires. Tire rubber has been widely shown to contain hazardous chemicals, most notably volatile and semi-volatile organic compounds, PAHs (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons), heavy metals, phthalates, vulcanization agents, and antioxidants. While proponents of crumb rubber may suggest that it is a sustainable source, given it is a reused waste material, we have to ask ourselves if subjecting our student athletes to its properties is prudent.

As an organic farmer in Central Maine, I have had a front row seat to the PFAS disaster that has unfolded in our State. While it has been shown without question that the chemical industry was well aware of the profound health risks of PFAS exposure, wastewater treatment facilities, government agencies and eventually the farmers who used this "recycled" product were unaware for years of the extreme hazards. To date, various PFAS have been identified in artificial turf samples ([Glüge et al. 2020](#); [Naim 2020](#); [Gomes et al. 2021](#)). At the very least, I hope we have learned something of the cautionary principle from our experience with PFAS on farmland. Just because we have the ability and technology to do something, doesn't mean we necessarily should.

The debate over whether it is safe to expose athletes to artificial turf is not isolated to Maine. You needn't look far to see that this conversation is happening around the US and Europe. LD 1177 does not ban artificial turf fields but rather provides the mandate to take a step back and look more closely at the public health and environmental concerns of these products before we go any further down this path.

I urge you to vote unanimously "Ought to Pass' on LD 1177

Thank you for your time,
Sincerely,
Prentice Grassi
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Freedom, Maine