

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO

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

April 9, 2025

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and esteemed members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, I am Robbie Feinberg, the director of communications and government relations of the Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and the Maine School Superintendents Association in opposition to L.D. 1177.

We want to be clear that our members are not in opposition to the goals of this study on the health and environmental risks of synthetic turf. Local communities have been wrestling with these issues for years, and we agree that a broad statewide analysis of the issue would be prudent and useful. We appreciate this bill would also require outreach to schools about the findings of this report, ensuring that school boards and superintendents are informed about the latest research on this difficult subject.

However, our members are concerned about the wider impact of the mandated moratorium in this bill. While we respect the bill's intent to limit potential harm to the environment, we are concerned that it does not take into account the many local projects that are already in development, and in some cases, have already been approved by voters.

As just a few examples:

- Last November, the town of Kittery approved an \$8 million artificial turf field project. The town, in its bid, says it is "committed to investigating turf and fill materials options that are verifiably pre- and polyfluoroalkyl substance (PFAS) free and recyclable, while still being durable and meeting the needs of the community."
- Last June, MSAD 51 approved an artificial turf project as part of a voter-approved referendum.
- South Portland will soon ask voters to approve one of several options for an athletic complex that could include artificial turf.

In at least one case, for MSAD 51, the project has already been put out to bid. We are concerned that projects in various stages of development could be adversely affected by the moratorium imposed by this bill, and in a worst-case scenario, it could cost taxpayers money if a district is forced to go back to the drawing board. We would ask that these projects in development be exempted from any moratorium and be allowed to proceed.

It is also important to recognize the deep care that is being used in the development of any of these school projects. Communities such as Kittery and Cumberland are fully aware of the known health risks associated

with PFAS and are doing everything possible to mitigate those risks. In MSAD 51, the district specifically worked to acquire artificial turf that is recyclable, PFAS-free, and without infill. School officials strive to balance the needs of their students with health and environmental risks, and districts are now considering new kinds of products that are less polluting and wasteful than those of 10 or 20 years ago.

Again, our associations would welcome this larger study to help school districts in their decision-making regarding future field construction, but we believe the moratorium proposed in L.D. 1177 should not interrupt the projects already in development across our state.