**Committee:** Budget and Taxation Committee
**Testimony on:  SB 0763**:  "Use of Public Funds - Playground and Athletic Field Surfaces - Preferences and Prohibitions"

**Position: SUPPORT**
**Hearing Date:  March 7, 2018 1 PM**

**Regarding:** SB 0763:  "Use of Public Funds - Playground and Athletic Field Surfaces - Preferences and Prohibitions"  Lead Sponsor Roger Manno, which will be heard by the Budget and Tax Committee [Edward J. Kasemeyer](http://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/05sen/html/msa12169.html) Chair [Richard S. Madaleno, Jr.](http://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/05sen/html/msa13963.html), *Vice-Chair* **on March 7, 2018 at 1 PM**

 I submit this testimony in support of SB763"Use of Public Funds - Playground and Athletic Field Surfaces - Preferences and Prohibitions", which addresses state investments in synthetic surfaces which imperil fiscal health, child health and the environment, especially when compared with natural surfaces which done right are beneficial to human and environmental health, are cost effective, durable and accessible.

Synthetic or Artificial Turf aka “Synturf” fields and playgrounds are cost-prohibitive initially and for the frequent disposal and replacements needed. They generate large amounts of plastic and rubber waste, pose environmental risks, and cause health problems to children and athletes subjected to the high surface heat and hazardous surface hardness. Synthetic materials such as tires, other rubber and plastics contain many toxic substances including heavy metals such as lead and mercury and carcinogens and endocrine disrupting chemicals of concern such as Phthalates. Additionally, there are no required standards for safety, nor regulations, testing or monitoring of the heat or the toxins on/in these surfaces.

State funds (Program Open Space, and other sources) have been used in the past for synthetic turf playgrounds and athletic fields in communities and schools. Those first generation of fields are starting to fail, becoming too hard, often even before the 8 year warranty period (see for example the million dollar Montgomery Blair High School field in Montgomery County, partially paid for by program open space funds in 2010, which needed to be replaced at $750,000 at 7 years due to hazardous hardness).  In addition to the unwarranted cost to the taxpayer, the breakdown of the plastic carpet into the environment and frequent landfill disposal and replacement of with acres of new petroleum-based plastic is a significant and increasing waste pollution issue.

This bill appropriately prohibits the use of state funds to finance any portion of a project to replace, or build a new, playground or athletic field with synthetic surfaces, including the base foundation construction. **In addition, it requires a state or local unit, responsible for the construction of playgrounds or athletic fields, to give consideration and *preference to the use of state-of-the-art natural surface materials when building a playground or athletic field that is paid for with public funds*.** T**his bill and this provision will end the perverse incentive to install unsustainable unhealthy, unsanitary and fiscally irresponsible synthetic surfaces while ignoring the significant benefits of and advances in sustainable, healthy cost effective durable natural surfaces.** For a good overview about the health hazards see: [http://www.center4research.org/nchr-letter-dc-city-council-artificial-turf/.](http://www.center4research.org/nchr-letter-dc-city-council-artificial-turf/.%20)Please *help keep landfill waste (tires) out of playfields and playfields (plastic carpet and tires or other infill) out of landfills.*

[Name of testimony author]

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