

TESTIMONY FROM RIVERS ALLIANCE OF CONNECTICUT
FOR THE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN

February 16, 2016

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RE: H.B. No. 5139 (RAISED) AAC THE USE OF RECYCLED TIRE RUBBER AT MUNICIPAL AND PUBLIC SCHOOL PLAYGROUNDS

Rivers Alliance of Connecticut is the statewide, non-profit coalition of river organizations, individuals, and businesses formed to protect and enhance Connecticut's waters by promoting sound water policies, uniting and strengthening the state's many river groups, and educating the public about the importance of water stewardship.

Dear Sen. Danté Bartolomeo and Rep. Diana Urban, Chairmen; and Honorable Committee Members:

First, thank you for your dedicated work to protect children's health, with a special thanks for your attention to playing fields. As a water stewardship organization, we are concerned with any relocation of toxic materials. Disturbance and dispersal of synthetic turf materials using crumb rubber from recycled tires during construction, hard use, and eventual disposal poses a risk to the quality of aquatic resources and wildlife. Also, the synthetic fields do not recharge groundwater (which would be a benefit) but rather create excess stormwater runoff, a leading cause of surface water contamination in the state. Finally, these fields do not effectively conserve water, since they require watering because they overheat readily. This is especially a problem for fields used for warm-weather play. There are *numerous* good sources of reliable information on this subject. One readable report is in the March 2008 edition of Environmental Health Perspectives titled "Synthetic Turf: A health Debate Takes Root." Here's a link

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2265067/>

I realize that the safe disposal or reuse of billions of tires is a very serious problem, but the crumb-rubber fields available today are not the answer. I am not a health expert, but I will add a personal comment. My son played high school football in Connecticut and semi-pro football (American football) in Germany. He loved the sport; it was good for him; and we did not protest. But he played on natural turf. Synthetic fields are miserable for athletes, witness the anger of the US Women's Soccer Team a year ago, when they were required to play championship games on artificial turf. Problems include burns blisters, abrasions, skin infections, and evidently more risk of serious injuries (including head injuries) related to hard falls. Parents should be concerned.

Sincerely, Margaret Miner, Executive Director, Rivers Alliance of Connecticut, Litchfield
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