

To: The Committee on Children

Re: AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF RECYCLED TIRE RUBBER AT MUNICIPAL AND PUBLIC SCHOOL PLAYGROUNDS. BILL 5139

Senator Dante Bartolomeo, Representative Diana Urban, and Members of the Committee on Children:

I am speaking today as a mother of three grown children and a Connecticut resident in strong support of Bill 5139, legislation that bans rubber tire mulch from children's playgrounds.

I bring you four items for your consideration: 1) Hartford's recent ban on the use of crumb rubber and petroleum-based artificial turf; 2) discussion of the carcinogens and irritants found in samples of crumb rubber infill and mulch last summer at Yale University; 3) discussion of the toxic metals in rubber mulch as reported in December by the Empire State Consumer Project 2015 Children's Products Safety Report; and 4) remarks by Stacy Prince, the mother of a childhood cancer survivor.

Bill 5139 provides for the statewide prohibition of the use of recycled tire rubber on Connecticut playgrounds. This action follows closely behind Hartford's municipal ban. In the first update of its zoning regulations in 50 years, Hartford has banned crumb rubber and petroleum-based artificial turf.

About Hartford's action, Sarah Bronin, who is a Hartford zoning board commissioner and director of the Center for Energy and Environmental Law at UConn Law School said this -"In a dense urban environment like Hartford, any negative environmental and public health effects of synthetic infill could be magnified. So the uncertainties about these effects weighed heavily on our decision. Rather than permitting synthetic infill and hoping for the best, we want for the science to show that these materials are safe before we permit them in Hartford."

The evidence is mounting that these materials are not safe because of the chemicals and metals we know are in the shredded tires constituting crumb rubber infill and mulch. These hazards should not be present where children, especially young children, play.

Last summer, Yale University found 12 carcinogens and 20 irritants in tested samples of crumb rubber infill and mulch that were sold for use on synthetic fields and playgrounds.

In December, the Empire State Consumer Project released their 2015 Children's Products Safety Report. The researchers found arsenic, cadmium, and zinc at "higher than current acceptable limits" in samples of rubber mulch. This testing turned up levels of toxics that exceed the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for Brownfields, which are former hazardous waste sites.

The recent tragedy of Flint, Michigan, where children have been permanently damaged from their exposure to another metal, lead, in their drinking water, serves as a grim reminder of children's vulnerability to damage from exposure to these elements.

The metals, cancer-causing chemicals, and irritants in these products pose an even greater potential harm to young children than to older students or athletes who play on rubber mulch or infill.

Young children's bodies and brains are growing and changing dynamically. They take in more air, water, and food relative to their body weight than adults do. In addition, what small children breathe when they play on rubber mulch may contain higher levels of gases because they are closer to the ground than older children or adults. Their habits of play make them more vulnerable than older children or adults. Disregarding its bad smell and taste, little kids will roll around on, dig in, and throw rubber mulch. They rub it into their eyes and put it in their noses and mouths. They carry mulch back into the classroom, into the car or bus, and home - on their hair, skin, and clothes, and in their shoes. As a result, young children are more extensively and intimately exposed than are older children or adults.

This brings me to my last point. In testimony she submitted to this committee in writing, which I urge all of you to read in full, Westport resident Stacy Prince shared words of caution. Stacy is the mother of a survivor of childhood cancer. Stacy writes "The real reason to keep crumb rubber away from children's play areas is because we *can*. We have very little control over the traffic on our streets or the chemicals in our water, but we can and should protect our littlest and most vulnerable citizens from exposure to the toxic compounds found in shredded tire waste."

Rubber waste tire mulch that is being put down in our smallest children's playgrounds is filled with toxic chemicals and heavy metals - this product should not be placed where our smallest children play.

Thank you for your attention,

Patricia Taylor
Milford, CT
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