



Testimony of Susan Eastwood
Of Clean Water Action CT and the Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Children's Committee
February 16, 2016

**Testimony in support of HB 5139
AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF RECYCLED TIRE RUBBER AT MUNICIPAL
AND PUBLIC SCHOOL PLAYGROUNDS**

Good afternoon Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and members of the Children's Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. **I speak in strong support of HB 5139, An Act Concerning the Use of Recycled Tire Rubber at Municipal and Public School Playgrounds.**

My name is Susan Eastwood, and I am the Director of Communications for the Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut, a group of over 50 non-profits working to phase out toxic chemicals from everyday products, staffed by Clean Water Action CT. Clean Water Action is a non-profit organization with one million members nationwide and over 20,000 members in Connecticut. I live in Ashford and am also a parent of two children.

As an advocate, a concerned citizen and a parent, I am concerned about the growing evidence that recycled tire rubber used in artificial turf may present serious risks to public health. There is controversy over how great these risks really are, but while studies continue, I feel that it would be wise to act in a precautionary manner and pause from installing any new playgrounds using this material until the science is complete.

End-of-life rubber tires are often recycled by being ground up into crumb rubber to be used as infill to provide cushioning and serve as a base for the blades in artificial turf fields. These crumbs of rubber infill are of concern for both harmful chemical exposures and non-chemical risks.

Chemicals that are known or suspected to be carcinogenic or toxic to the nervous or reproductive systems have been detected in crumb rubber infill and in the surrounding air. These chemicals include rubber, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and heavy metals (lead, zinc, iron, and manganese)ⁱ. When this material is used on municipal or school playgrounds it is of particular concern because developing children are more vulnerable to exposure to toxic chemicals in the environment; exposure to even a small amount can affect a child for life.



Exposure is generally through inhalation of small particles, ingestion, or direct absorption through the skin during play on the artificial turf.

More easily seen are the non-chemical injuries caused by abrasion or by overheating. Athletes playing on turf fields have been shown to have more abrasions or “turf burns,” which in turn can harbor infection. On hot days, surface temperatures of synthetic turf can get up to 60 degrees higher than natural grass and have been measured as high as 160 degrees. Clearly, children should not be playing on surfaces at extreme temperatures; they can develop heat-induced illnesses (eg. dehydration, heat stress, heat stroke, and heat burns)ⁱⁱ.

No parent would want their child to play on a playground if they knew that this would put the child at risk of disease or injury. No town would willingly spend millions of dollars to build a health hazard. It seems only reasonable to use caution and encourage the use of available alternatives or simply hold off on building more playgrounds using crumb rubber until the risks have been thoroughly studied.

Clean Water Action greatly appreciates the past work of the Connecticut legislature to protect our children and our environment and hope they will continue their leadership by passing **HB 5139** this session.

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Eastwood".

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ⁱ Fact Sheet on Synthetic Turf Used in Athletic Fields and Play Areas. New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Web site. Updated 2009. Accessed 10/5, 2010.

ⁱⁱ Denly E, Rutkowski K, Vetrano KM, et al. A review of the potential health and safety risks from synthetic turf fields containing crumb rubber infill. New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. 2008.