



House Bill 1098

*Use of Public Funds – Playground and Athletic Field Surfaces – Authorizations,
Preferences, and Prohibitions (Safe and Healthy Fields Act)*

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Appropriations Committee

Date: March 5, 2020

From: Alex Butler

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 1098 as it would impose an unnecessary restriction on the use of state funds, including Program Open Space (POS) monies, for the installation of synthetic or artificial turf playing fields and playground surfaces.

In the parks and recreation world, both natural and synthetic turf fields play important roles and MACo believes it should be up to each individual jurisdiction to determine which type of field best meets the needs of the jurisdiction and their residents. Restricting or discouraging the use of synthetic turf fields and playgrounds would place an unnecessary hardship on already limited local funds. Additionally, the General Assembly has considered and rejected synthetic turf bans or prohibitions nearly every year for the last seven years.

Synthetic turf fields do provide some benefits over regular turf. A properly managed synthetic turf surface can see more play time than natural turf and is also less costly to maintain. Synthetic turf also meets federal Americans with Disabilities Act requirements, while wood mulch and similar natural play areas do not. The fields also reduce exposure to pesticides and herbicides.

The Maryland Association of County Park and Recreation Administrators (MACPRA) conservatively estimates that more than 3.5 million individuals play on artificial or synthetic turf fields in Maryland every year. Billions of people have played on the surfaces worldwide.

Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to give HB 1098 an UNFAVORABLE report.