

April 16, 2023

Dear Town Meeting Members,

We (Mothers Out Front, Arlington) are a group of mothers and other caregivers working together to ensure a livable climate for all children – today and into the future. We care deeply about getting our children physical activity, but not at the expense of their overall health, our water supply, the local ecosystems, and environment.

We support the Article 12 Substitute Motion, which would establish a committee to study the use of artificial turf and pause any decision on turf use until the study is complete. The Article 12 Substitute Motion reduces the duration of the original moratorium proposed in the Warrant Article from three years to two years or less. We need further study on the cost effectiveness, safety, and environmental impact of artificial or synthetic turf before it is installed in Arlington. The pace of new and growing evidence about the dangers of PFAS chemicals in artificial turf is alarming, and reason enough to pause and assess the implications for our town and our children.

Many of us have kids that enjoy the grass playing fields in Arlington. We appreciate the great work put into maintaining the fields that allow our kids to get outside and play. However, artificial turf is not the solution we need. Turf fields will likely result in our kids inhaling, ingesting, and getting into their bloodstreams toxic chemicals that can impact their health for years to come. Turf fields become heat islands, radiating heat vs. absorbing and cooling our communities. Not only will it be riskier for our children playing on the fields during heat waves, but it will impact the broader community – more heat, less biodiversity, more petro-chemicals radiating into our air and water supply.

Furthermore, installing artificial turf is not necessary to ensure generous playing time. Hurd Field behind Trader Joes is an example of how natural grass playing fields can be made to be durable and robust when designed with proper drainage for improved access...and at a fraction of the costs of artificial turf. Part of the proposed study should examine necessary drainage. Changing from a porous natural surface to an entirely synthetic/plastic surface has a high risk of causing flooding in surrounding areas. As our planet warms, we need to plan for wetter, more extreme weather and our playing fields should not be prioritized over homes and businesses.

We strongly ask that you let our kids continue to play on grass (mud, insects, worms, and all) while we take a thoughtful approach to any future artificial turf use in Arlington.

Sincerely,

Claire Moodie, co-coordinator

Jessica Sullivan, co-coordinator

Alicia Russel, leadership team member

Ann Boland, leadership team member

on behalf of the Arlington Chapter of Mothers Out Front