



**PLAYING
FOR KEEPS
FOUNDATION**

FOR ONE-ON-ONE ADVOCACY AND OFFICIAL MEETINGS

A FRAMEWORK FOR EVIDENCE-BASED TURF POLICY

UNDERSTANDING & ADDRESSING POLICYMAKERS' CONCERNS

Most elected officials are working to pass regulations and laws they genuinely believe will enhance the lives of their constituents in some way. So when you enter into a conversation with them about turf, seek first to understand. What is their point of view? What don't they like about artificial turf? In what way do they believe banning turf will enhance communities and the lives of their constituents?

If you don't have the opportunity to ask questions one-on-one, you can get a good sense of any elected official's hot-button issues and where they're coming from on their websites and social media feeds. So do a little homework; nobody responds well to being overwhelmed with talking points and arguments!

Once you understand their "why," you can make the following recommendations, which are intended to ensure all consequences – intended or unintended – have been thought through as they make policy related to artificial turf.

If The Elected Official Is Concerned About Equity

Key Talking Points:

Field access is an equity issue. When a public field closes because of intensive wear, rain, or the need for recovery time and reseeded, families with private-club memberships, transportation, and other options can find another place to play. Many children cannot. For them, a closed neighborhood field can mean no practice, no game, and no comparable alternative.

Access to artificial turf is a social justice issue in dense urban communities where land and maintenance resources are limited. Around 6.8 million U.S. children live in neighborhoods without parks, and low-income children are two to three times less likely to participate in organized sports.

Your Ask Of The Official Before Considering A Blanket Artificial Turf Ban:

- Evaluate how many children, schools, leagues, and community programs currently rely on each field.
- Measure who would lose playing time under a ban and whether realistic replacement capacity exists nearby.
- Prioritize access for children who depend on public facilities and cannot simply shift to private or distant fields.
- Require an equity and field-capacity analysis before eliminating a surface option or converting a high-use field.
- Protect affordable access for school programs, recreation leagues, girls' sports, adaptive recreation, and neighborhood organizations.

If The Elected Official Is Concerned About Playing Hours/Access To Playing Fields

Key Talking Points:

The practical value of a field is not just in how it looks or what it's made of, it's how often children can actually use it. High-use fields must serve schools, recreation programs, families, and community organizations, often on the same day and throughout the year.

Studies have shown that a community would need to build 4-7 natural grass fields for every one artificial turf field to provide the same number of actual playing hours. The exact result varies by climate, design, maintenance, scheduling, and local conditions, so every community should verify its own facilities data. However, the central policy point remains: playable hours and cancellations must be measured before a ban is considered.

Your Ask Of The Official Before Considering A Blanket Artificial Turf Ban:

- Compare annual permitted hours, actual use, rain closures, maintenance closures, and canceled practices or games by surface.
- Calculate how much replacement land, construction funding, irrigation, staffing, and maintenance would be needed to preserve current capacity.
- Consider artificial turf where intensive use makes natural grass difficult to keep consistently safe and playable.
- Use natural grass where it can meet the site's recreational demand and artificial turf where added capacity is necessary.

If The Elected Official Is Concerned About Chemical Safety

Key Talking Points:

Supporting access to quality playing surfaces does not mean accepting every product as is. Our community should authorize only systems that meet stringent, transparent standards, and we should distinguish modern products from older generations of turf.

Your Ask Of The Official Before Considering A Blanket Artificial Turf Ban:

- Require products manufactured without intentionally added PFAS and turf systems that exclude crumb-rubber infill.
- Require compliance with applicable California Proposition 65 requirements and recognized U.S. safety standards.
- Set standards for lead, heavy metals, drainage, shock attenuation, traction, accessibility, maintenance, and field performance.
- Require full material disclosure, product-specific third-party testing, certifications, and enforceable warranties.
- Adopt heat-monitoring, hydration, scheduling, shade, and field-use protocols appropriate to our community's conditions.
- Inspect and maintain every field, natural or artificial, to ensure the surface remains safe and performs as intended.

If The Elected Official Is Concerned About End-Of-Life Management Of Turf

Key Talking Points:

No artificial turf field should be approved without a clear and enforceable plan for removal and end-of-life handling. Our community can use procurement standards to demand accountability rather than assuming responsible disposal will happen on its own.

Your Ask Of The Official Before Considering A Blanket Artificial Turf Ban:

- Require a written end-of-life plan, including identified receiving or processing facilities and estimated costs, before installation.
- Give preference to systems designed for material separation, recovery, reuse, or recycling.
- Require manufacturer or contractor take-back commitments and documentation showing where removed materials went.
- Evaluate the entire system, including fibers, backing, infill, pads, and adhesives.
- Secure financial assurances so taxpayers are not left with unfunded removal obligations.

If The Elected Official Is Concerned About Cost

Key Talking Points:

The best comparison for the cost of an artificial turf field vs. the cost of a natural grass field is the total cost of ownership and cost per usable hour, not the installation price alone. Our community should account for construction, irrigation, staffing, mowing, fertilization, reseeding, rehabilitation, maintenance closures, replacement, and end-of-life costs over the entire lifetime of the field, along with the number of hours residents can actually use the field.

Your Ask Of The Official Before Considering A Blanket Artificial Turf Ban:

- Publish a side-by-side lifecycle analysis for each proposed site.
- Include the cost of replacement capacity if a ban reduces available playing hours.
- Use the community's actual schedules, weather, maintenance records, and demand whenever possible.
- Preserve flexibility to select different surfaces at different locations.

We believe communities should have the option to choose the surface that makes the most sense for the specific application and community need. And we believe those surfaces should be safe. Too often, the argument is framed as an either-or, and it's simply not a binary choice.



REMEMBER:

Lead with people, not policy.

Decision-makers hear policies every day.
They remember people.

Communities can protect public health and the environment while also protecting access to play by:



Setting the strongest standards.



Requiring turf products to contain no intentionally added PFAS, and third-party verification to prove it.



Excluding crumb rubber from artificial turf fields to reduce primary microplastics and heat.



Demanding transparent testing, heat protocols, responsible maintenance, and enforceable end-of-life plans.



Measuring the playing time and programs that children would gain or lose with each surface under consideration.



Considering water, total lifecycle impacts, and cost per playable hour.

By asking these questions, communities can make the best decisions to give kids what we all want – access to play and the wonderful life lessons that come from it!

ABOUT PLAYING FOR KEEPS

We raise funds to install turf fields in communities that lack safe places to play. We identify high-need sites, build partnerships with municipalities and school districts, and ensure every project is designed for lasting community benefit.