

HOWARD COUNTY FARM BUREAU, INC.

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February 23, 2022

Re: HB0934 – Gasoline-Powered Leaf Blowers - **OPPOSE**

I am writing to you on behalf of the Howard County Farm Bureau, to share our opposition to HB0934 – Gasoline-Powered Leaf Blowers. This bill would prohibit the sale, and ultimately, the use of gasoline-powered leaf blowers within the State of Maryland.

Leaf blowers are one of many essential tools that farmers use in their operation. It is very useful and handy in cleaning and maintenance of equipment, as well as around the farm in general. While it may not seem there is much difference between a gasoline-powered and a battery- or electric-powered leaf blower, I have used both and am here to testify that there are vast differences, both in the force/velocity, as well as the length of operation between these two types of blowers. The performance difference between the two could make some of our farm jobs more time consuming and difficult to complete.

When considering this bill, please take a few moments to also consider the types of tasks a leaf blower is used for. While a home-owner may be able to utilize a battery-powered blower for lighter duty tasks, such as blowing leaves, many blower uses within agriculture are more heavy duty, and require the use of a gasoline-powered blower that has significantly more power and can run longer – something a battery-powered blower cannot compete with. Please also note that the power emitted by a battery leaf blower does not remain consistent throughout use. As the charge wears down on a battery, so does the velocity or force of the blower, making it more difficult to complete the task at hand. A law prohibiting the use of gasoline-powered leaf blowers will create additional labor and cost to the operation of our farms.

Some examples of how leaf blowers are used as part of a farming operation:

- During harvest, when equipment is away from home without easy access to an air compressor or other such tool, we use leaf blowers to clean off our equipment at the end of each day, usually late in the evening and way after dark. Cleaning off the equipment daily goes a long way in maintaining our equipment, ensuring that it continues to run better and last longer, then if it were clogged with dust and debris from the day's work (which can also create a fire hazard on our equipment). Corn fodder is heavier and more dense than dry leaves and can sometimes take excessive force to effectively clear off the machinery. Usually this daily clean up occurs in a remote field, somewhere far from the barn/workshop. A battery-operated blower would make for a slower and longer job, and a long day even longer. It would more than likely require multiple battery packs to complete the job, as the battery charge has a tendency to wear out before the job is complete – and we do not have access in the field to electric to recharge the battery.

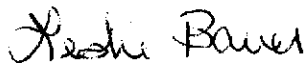
- Aside from harvest, leaf blowers are used throughout the year around the farm. Again, oftentimes for tasks where a stationery air compressor cannot be used. Since leaf blowers are portable, they can be used to clean out buildings, whether it be after working on equipment in a shop, or removing old hay/straw from a barn before stacking in new hay/straw.
- Leaf blowers can be used assist with cleaning out animal pens and the removal of soiled animal bedding (blown out to a tractor which will then haul it away). They are also useful for blowing off fans in enclosed barns, to ensure that the fans are clear of debris so that the animals inside receive proper ventilation.

This is a sampling of some of the uses for a leaf blower on the farm. While a battery-operated leaf blower may suffice for some of these jobs, again, many require something a little more heavy duty. A gasoline-powered blower can help make quick work of a variety of farm tasks.

Again, I would urge you to please vote against HB0934. Prohibiting the use of gasoline-powered leaf blowers would create added time and labor to completing tasks around the farm, making many of the day-to-day jobs of a farmer just that much harder.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Leslie Bauer
President
Howard County Farm Bureau