

## House Bill 0934

### Gasoline-Powered Leaf Blowers - Sale, Offering for Sale, and Use - Prohibition

Delegate Foley

Testimony submitted by Ms. Roberta G Steinman

Date: Feb 23, 2022

#### I am in favor of Banning Gas Leaf Blowers, especially in Urban Areas in Montgomery County

Banning the use of Gas-powered leaf blowers will improve air quality, reduce noise pollution,

Gas leaf blowers have become a persistent source of air and noise pollution. We hear their loud, high-pitched noise from mid- to late February each year until the following January. Additionally, pollution from leaf blowers compounds and leads directly to other forms of air pollution. When gas leaf blowers are operating in full force in our neighborhood, we must **close our doors and windows** instead of simply allowing a fresh spring breeze to cool their homes.

The **health consequences of breathing polluted air affects all age, race, and socioeconomic demographics**. Every individual that walks or enters our neighborhoods is harmed by breathing the exhaust of unnecessary leaf blowers. I live in a walkable neighborhood where many people enjoy walking, running, pushing babies in stroller, and walking the dog as their daily exercise regimen. But that pleasurable and healthful activity has become so unpleasant due to the pollution and noise from the omnipresent gas-powered leaf blowers that we are forced to curtail that activity.

It's time for the state of Maryland to join communities across the U.S. and ban the sale and use of gasoline-powered leaf blowers.<sup>1</sup> Gas blowers emit hydrocarbons at rates up to nine times higher than those generated by electric blowers. It's estimated that using a commercial leaf blower for one hour emits as much pollution as driving a 2016 Toyota Camry from D.C. to Miami. One study showed that a leaf blower's two-stroke engine can produce nearly 300 times the hydrocarbon emissions of a pickup truck, as well as much more toxic carbon monoxide and nitrous oxide fumes.

At the same time, the environmental effects of blower noise will cause birds, frogs, pollinating insects and other creatures to vacate an area, affecting the ecosystem. Gas-powered blowers produce double the number of decibels and have a lower sound frequency than electric leaf blowers. Because they cause high levels of sound at low frequencies, the roar of gas blowers can be heard 23 houses away from a lawn that's being blown, whereas the sound of electric blowers only will travel six houses away. There are so many eco-friendly alternatives, including electric blowers, rakes, and leaving the leaves on the ground.

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<sup>1</sup> Over 20 cities in California have completely banned all gas-powered leaf blowers and the results have been entirely positive. The bans are reported as being 90 – 95% enforceable, of little burden to enforce, and citizen satisfaction with the bans is reported to be as high as 100%.

( <https://mont.thesentinel.com/2019/05/02/american-lung-association-moco-air-is-unhealthy/> )

In addition to negative effects on the environment, the noise and toxic fumes generated by gas-powered blowers impact the health and safety of workers who use them on the job. Landscape workers and others may experience hearing loss and respiratory problems due to extensive exposure to two-stroke, engine-driven leaf blowers.

Some landscaping companies argue that going green and using electric power tools will slightly reduce their efficiency and make them less competitive. This is precisely why a ban will be so beneficial, as it will level the playing field across all companies and not allow a small number of free-riders to profit from the good will of ecofriendly companies.

It is time to act. Our health, the air we breathe, our well-being is simply more important than the appearance of our lawns.

I would like to see an absolute ban on gas leaf blowers, particularly and especially, within the densely populated urban portions of Montgomery County. Specifically, I would like to propose an immediate ban on using these devices on properties that are less than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an acre. This will tremendously reduce air pollution in our dense urban areas.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted

Ms. Roberta G Steinman

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