



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND  
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

[www.womensdemocraticclub.org](http://www.womensdemocraticclub.org)

**House Bill 399**  
**Gasoline-Powered Leaf Blowers – Sale, Offering for Sale, and Use - Prohibition**  
**Health and Government Operations – March 1, 2023**  
**FAVORABLE**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2023 legislative session. WDC is one of Maryland's largest and most active Democratic clubs with hundreds of politically active members, including many elected officials.

**WDC urges the passage of HB0399**, which prohibits the state from purchasing gasoline-powered leaf blowers (GLB) beginning July 1, 2023, and then prohibits their use beginning July 1, 2025. These measures will encourage the manufacture and sale of more environmentally friendly leaf removal devices for state use.

Curbing the use of GLBs aligns with [Maryland's 2030 Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act Plan](#) which calls for a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2030. House Bill 399 would reduce climate, environmental, and acute health impacts from the use of GLBs. This noisy equipment operates at a low frequency which penetrates walls more easily than the higher frequency of electric blowers. In fact, a GLB used in a neighborhood at 65 decibels emits a noise that can be heard up to 23 homes away from the place of use compared to just 6 homes for electric blowers.

In addition to their environmental harm, GLBs contribute to multiple negative health outcomes. For example, a compilation of studies confirms that low-frequency noise is a powerful stressor. The most cited effects on human health refer to emotional changes such as annoyance, agitation, and distraction. In addition to cognitive alterations, the development of cardiovascular diseases, sleep disorders, high blood pressure, and more recently, the effects of industrial low-frequency noise on dental wear are also associated with the effects of low-frequency noise. In short, noise generated by GLBs disrupts our work, interferes with children's schooling, and lowers quality of life. Leaf blower operators, often underrepresented minorities, are being put in dangerous situations that are detrimental to their health. In addition, GLBs force birds and frogs to move away from the noise, while plant life and pollinators are disrupted by the force and heat from operation of the equipment.

Of equal concern is the fact that GLBs emit large quantities of harmful air pollutants. They generate particulates which are inhaled by equipment operators and nearby residents and contribute to regional air pollution problems. GLBs emit significant quantities of ozone-forming chemicals, carbon monoxide, and other toxic air pollutants. GLBs also generate CO<sub>2</sub> at a rate of 3 to 9 times higher than electric-powered blowers, contributing to climate change effects. [A 2011 study by Edmunds](#) found that a two-stroke gasoline-powered leaf blower spewed out more pollution than a 6,200-pound Ford F-150 SVT Raptor pickup truck.



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This type of pollution causes or contributes to premature mortality, cardiovascular disease, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer, premature births, and other adverse health impacts.<sup>1</sup> Even short-term exposure can be harmful. Children, seniors, people with chronic illness, and landscape workers are at greatest risk. Battery-powered leaf blowers emit much lower quantities of air pollutants. A statewide phase-out of GLBs will give us cleaner, quieter, and safer communities. A vast amount of leaf blowers are used in suburbs neighboring Washington, D.C. Chevy Chase Village, the Town of Chevy Chase, and Somerset, have all passed bills modeled after a DC law that went into effect on January 1, 2021 that bans the sale of GLBs in 2024, and subsequently their use in 2025. Over 170 jurisdictions nationwide have enacted laws that ban the sale and use of GLBs. It makes sense that Maryland takes similar action to D.C. since landscapers often work in both regions.

These machines do more harm than good. House Bill 399 is a micro measure with macro impact and puts Maryland on the path to a cleaner, safer environment. For these reasons, **we ask for your support for HB0399 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.**

Diana E. Conway  
WDC President

JoAnne Koravos  
WDC Advocacy Chair

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<sup>1</sup> Araújo Alves J, Neto Paiva F, Torres Silva L, Remoaldo P. Low-Frequency Noise and Its Main Effects on Human Health—A Review of the Literature between 2016 and 2019. *Applied Sciences*. 2020; 10(15):5205. <https://doi.org/10.3390/app10155205>