



P.O. Box 278
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Committee: Health and Government Operations

Testimony on: HB399 “Gasoline-Powered Leaf Blowers – State Purchase and Use – Prohibition”

Position: Support

Hearing Date: March 1, 2023

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges a favorable report on HB399. This legislation will prohibit the State from purchasing gas-powered leaf blowers beginning on July 1 of this year, and prohibit the State from using gas-powered leaf blowers beginning on July 1, 2025.

Gas-powered leaf blowers emit significant quantities of ozone-forming chemicals, carbon monoxide, and other toxic air pollutants, and they generate CO₂ at a rate three to nine times higher than electric-powered blowers, contributing to climate change effects. A 2011 study by Edmunds,¹ showed that under normal usage conditions, a leaf blower two-stroke engine emits nearly 300 times the hydrocarbons of a pickup truck, 93 times the hydrocarbons of a sedan, and many times as much carbon monoxide and nitrous oxides. The hydrocarbon emissions from a two-stroke leaf blower in a half-hour of yard work are about the same as a 3,900-mile drive in a Ford pickup.

The types of emissions in leaf blower exhaust have been linked in other settings to a variety of adverse health effects.² These include cardiovascular disease, stroke, respiratory disease, lymphomas, leukemias, other types of cancer, neurological disorders including autism, premature death, and effects on prenatal development.

The noise from the gas-powered leaf blowers is harmful to the well-being of humans and the existence of other species such as birds, frogs, and other creatures that may be forced to move away. Plant life and pollinators are likely to be disrupted by their force and heat.

Most gas leaf blowers “impact the operator’s ears at 100 decibels or more” and according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,³ exposure to 100 decibels for just 15 minutes a day can lead to hearing loss. Frontline workers, including BIPOC Communities, are disproportionately affected.

¹ <https://www.edmunds.com/about/press/leaf-blowers-emissions-dirtier-than-high-performance-pick-up-trucks-says-edmunds-insidelinecom.html>.

² National Emissions from Lawn and Garden Equipment, <https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2015-09/documents/banks.pdf>.

³ https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/hearing_loss/what_noises_cause_hearing_loss.html.

Washington DC's law banning gas-powered leaf blowers went into effect last year. California and about 170 cities and towns have passed similar legislation. Two jurisdictions in Montgomery County – Chevy Chase Village and the Town of Chevy Chase – have also passed bans on gas-powered leaf blowers.

We urge a favorable report on HB339.

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