

Committee: Health and Government Operations

Testimony on: Gasoline-Powered Leaf Blowers - State Purchase and Use - Prohibition

Position: Support

Hearing Date: March 1, 2023

A gasoline powered leaf blower generates as much pollutants in one hour as driving a 2017 Toyota Camry 1,100 miles, according to a 2020 Carb SORE (California Air Resources Board, Small Off-road Engines) study.¹ Using that *one leaf blower for less than 13 hours produces as much pollution as the average Camry driver in Maryland does in an entire year*. A typical commercial user uses a leaf blower 282 hours annually² putting out the equivalent pollution as 23 cars for each blower. Additionally, that same leaf blower produces more than 300 times more non-methane hydrocarbons than a pick-up truck, according to Edmonds.³

These small and relatively inexpensive tools (avg. <\$250) and equipment produce an outsized amount of greenhouse gas and pollution. We simply cannot address the climate crisis without addressing these outsized contributors. According to the previously mentioned Carb study, leaf blowers, pressure washers, and most other small pieces of equipment have a typical life of just 5 years for residential usage and 3 years for businesses, so they are frequently replaced and they are relatively inexpensive.⁴ Electric versions of this same equipment lasts far longer and will likely be a significant savings over time, especially when eliminating fuel cost.

In addition to the impact on climate change, a recent, widely distributed, three-year study of bees in the U.K. demonstrated a significant impact to pollinators from air pollution, like that generated by these devices. The pollution seems to confuse bees causing them to pollinate less and less effectively piling on to the challenges of pesticides, loss of habitat and native plants and colony collapse.⁵

While all the other environmental reasons should be sufficient to compel one to support the bill, there is the additional adverse impact to people that should be considered. Workers, members of the public, including children, are routinely exposed to the air and noise pollution these devices create. State owned land is often widely used public space. Extensive evidence exists on the adverse health effects of exhaust emissions and other fine particulates, which include cardiovascular disease, stroke, respiratory disease, cancer, neurological conditions, premature death, and effects on prenatal development.

Lastly, gas powered leaf blowers can be heard from a great distance at harmful decibel levels. From spring through late fall it is nearly impossible to be outdoors without experiencing the literally deafening sound of blowers. Children and adults are routinely exposed to these sounds without ear protection and over sustained periods of time. According to the CDC, hearing loss is the third most common chronic health condition in

the U.S. A gas powered leaf blower generates between 80-112 decibels of noise. Sound over 85 decibels causes hearing damage. People walking in a park or near a state building are regularly exposed as noise travels and causes hearing damage to those without adequate protection. Electric leaf blowers aren't quiet, however, they are an audible improvement.

These offensively loud devices prevent us from enjoying public spaces and the outdoors and put the public at risk. I urge you to act.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on HB399. Thank you.

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¹California Air Resources Board, *Carb SORE Fact Sheet*, <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/resources/fact-sheets/sore-small-engine-fact-sheet>

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

³ Kavanagh, Jason. December 5, 2011, *Emissions Test: Car vs. Truck vs. Leaf Blower*
<https://www.edmunds.com/car-reviews/features/emissions-test-car-vs-truck-vs-leaf-blower.html>

⁴California Air Resources Board, *2020 Emissions Model for Small Off-Road Engines – SORE2020*, p. 32
https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2020-09/SORE2020_Technical_Documentation_2020_09_09_Final_Cleaned_ADA.pdf

⁵*Anthropogenic Air Pollutants, Reduce Insect-Mediated Pollination Services, Environmental Pollution*, 15 March 2022. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0269749122000616?via%3Dihub>