



February 21, 2023

**HB399 Gasoline Powered Leaf Blowers - State Purchase and Use - Prohibition
FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice-Chair Kelly and Honorable Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

The Green Towson Alliance writes in support of HB399, which prohibits the State from purchasing a gasoline-powered leaf blower beginning July 1, 2023, and prohibits the state from using a gasoline-powered leaf blower after July 1, 2025. The restrictions on the government's purchase and use of these machines will send a clear message that our state is advocating for the health of Marylanders and our environment. Research shows that gasoline-powered leaf blowers produce noxious pollutants and generate noise that can cause serious hearing problems. The Green Towson Alliance works to create a healthier community by restoring habitats and educating our neighbors about ecological choices we all can make in our own backyards. With the passage of this bill, the legislature will acknowledge the dangers of these leaf blowers and set an example for businesses and citizens to follow.

The Centers for Disease Control warns that the two-stroke gasoline engines used on commercial leaf blowers generate noise at 80 to 85 decibels, with some as high as 105 decibels – equivalent to a plane taking off. For users, “hearing loss is possible in less than 5 minutes,” the CDC reports. Bystanders are also at risk because the low-frequency noise penetrates walls and travels long distances. Neighbors as far as 2,500 feet away can be exposed to sounds louder than the 55 decibels considered safe by the World Health Organization.

More than 100 U.S. cities and counties have restricted the use of gas-powered leaf blowers, including Washington, D.C, and Montgomery County. The California Air Research Board found that using a leaf blower for one hour creates emissions equivalent to driving a car 1,100 miles. Toxins include carbon monoxide, particulate matter that penetrates the lungs and compounds that irritate the eyes, skin and respiratory tract. The state must stop exposing its landscape workers to such health hazards, especially when battery-powered electric leaf blowers are an energy-efficient and affordable alternative.

We ask for a favorable report on HB399 as an important step toward the goal of a greener, healthier Maryland for all.

Respectfully,

Molly Glassman for the Green Towson Alliance

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