



Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, *Chair*
Delegate Bonnie Cullison, *Vice-Chair*
House Health & Government Operations Committee
House Office Building, Room 241
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: *House Bill 91: Fossil Fuel-Powered Lawn and Garden Care Equipment - State Purchase, Use, and Contracts – Prohibition - OPPOSED*

January 23, 2024

Dear Chairwoman Pena-Melnyk and HGO Committee Members:

On behalf of the Mid-Atlantic Field Manager Association (MASFMA) and the Maryland Turfgrass Council (MTC), we write this letter in *opposition* of House Bill 91: Fossil Fuel-Powered Lawn and Garden Care Equipment - State Purchase, Use, and Contracts – Prohibition.

The Mid-Atlantic Sports Field Management Association (MASFMA) is a non-profit organization that is composed of sports turf field managers and workers from Maryland, Delaware, Washington D.C., and Northern Virginia. As MASFMA members, we partner together to promote education, teamwork, networking, and best practices among our peers and within the Sports Turf Management Industry. We have partnered with Maryland Turfgrass Council (MTC) this year to bring a more unified front from all aspects of our industry. MTC represents all areas of the turf industry including golf, sports turf, sod producers, landscape, lawncare and commercial vendors and suppliers.

As written, HB91 prohibits the State from purchasing fossil fuel-powered lawn and garden care equipment beginning January 1, 2025, under certain circumstances. This prohibition will progressively become an outright ban for the state to use any fossil fuel-powered lawn and garden care equipment beginning in 2030.

This legislation also places certain restrictions on certain State contracts. If passed, HB91 would also prohibit the State from entering into or renewing a contract under which the contractor, or a subcontractor employed by the contractor, uses fossil fuel-powered lawn and garden care equipment beginning January 1, 2025.

MTC and MASFMA oppose this legislation for several reasons – including the economical and long-term environmental impacts. The intent for migrating this equipment to be fully electric (i.e. batteries), statewide, is laudable. However, there are many unresolved issues that will make this a transition extremely difficult and costly for locally based companies as well as the state under this provision of the bill.

For many small landscaping businesses (operating in Maryland), this provision will not only create financial hardship, but will also significantly reduce competitive viability in the state’s procurement marketplace. Companies that would typically compete for state contracts would be disqualified from bidding due to these new prohibitions, thereby resulting in a drastic undercut of competition

to only a selected few that have the financial resources to meet this bill's new mandate. The cost of the equipment and the added infrastructure will result in many companies selling their business to larger, commercial operators who can afford this expenditure. Alternatively, their other option will be to increase their price of services to cover the cost of the new batteries and equipment, in order to pursue future business relations with the State.

For the State, the results will likely be a reduction in the turnaround time for contractors to get projects completed as well as experiencing an increased wait time between jobs as it takes longer to complete jobs with electric powered equipment with charge times for commercial equipment taking longer. The options for keeping production time reasonable may result in two options. Option one is buying more batteries, which adds to up-front costs, or option two which is to use a gas-powered generator to charge the batteries between jobs, which goes against what this bill is attempting to do.

To put in perspective for pricing a gas-powered backpack blower is \$550, the price for an equivalent battery backpack blower with the long-life backpack battery is \$1,300.00. The battery kits alone are \$400.00. This is for the EGO LBX 6000, which offers the best battery to power comparison. With that battery will last for around 1 hour. The problem is that it also takes an hour to charge those batteries which results in needing more batteries and more power to charge those batteries. This all leads to longer wait times between jobs and overall, less efficient use of company time and resources. This is a very brief example of the economic impact from this bill, the other side of it is if the state municipalities cannot subcontract to businesses who are not operating battery equipment, then they could suffer heavy losses of income to keep their companies afloat and thriving. This can lead to an extra burden on taxpayers for inflated state contract prices. Electric mowers must be used on shorter grasses, or they will be bogged down and drain the battery. Electric mowers will increase mowing frequencies which goes against the established MDOT SHA Turfgrass Guidelines. The increased frequencies will cause state mowing contracts to double or triple in cost.

Environmental impacts from gas-powered emissions are there but the newer machines are running more and more efficiently. The batteries from the electric equipment are both costly to make and there is no real disposal system in place for all the batteries outside of putting them in the landfill which can lead to them cracking and leaking and further contaminating the ground water. The noise levels of the blowers are comparable when you are close to them. Both require ear protection while wearing them and the ANSI ratings are taken from 75 ft away. The EGO Power LBX 6000(battery) is rated at 66 dB and the Husqvarna 360 BT (2-stroke gas) is 60 db. These two are comparable in power, weight, and running time. The noise levels are very similar from the same distance, which makes the real difference between them the cost and effectiveness of the blowers in the long run.

For these reasons we at MASFMA and MTC are opposed to HB0091. Until there is better and more efficient commercial grade equipment on the market this bill will do far more harm than good for the state of Maryland.

Thank you,

Rob Navolis and Patrick Coakley

Robert Navolis

Patrick Coakley

Robert Navolis – Treasurer – MASFMA

Patrick Coakley – Vice President – MTC

Sources: <https://www.popularmechanics.com/home/tools/reviews/g135/backpack-leaf-blower-comparison/>

<https://www.protoolreviews.com/gas-vs-battery-powered-leaf-blowers/>