



Committee: Health and Government Operations
Testimony on: HB0091 - Fossil Fuel-Powered Lawn and Garden Care Equipment - State Purchase, Use, and Contracts - Prohibition
Organization: Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing
Submitting: Laurie McGilvray, Co-Chair
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: January 23, 2024

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of HB0091. The Maryland Legislative Coalition (MLC) Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of nearly 30 grassroots and professional organizations, urges you to vote favorably on HB0091.

HB0091 will prohibit the State from: 1) purchasing fossil fuel-powered lawn and garden care equipment beginning January 1, 2025; 2) entering into or renewing a contract for a contractor (or associated subcontractor) who uses fossil fuel-powered lawn and garden care equipment for state projects beginning January 1, 2025; and 3) using any fossil fuel-powered lawn and garden care equipment beginning January 1, 2030.

This bill is important because it will help Maryland significantly reduce its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2031, as required by the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022, and in alignment with Governor Moore's Climate Reduction Plan released in December 2023. It also helps the State lead by example in making the transition away from fossil fuels while achieving health benefits for lawn care workers, as well as the environmental benefits.

Environmental Impacts

Fossil-fuel powered leaf blowers and other lawn care equipment have both environmental and health impacts, which similar electric equipment lack. For example, using a gas-powered leaf blower for one hour emits the same amount of pollution as a car driving from Washington, D.C. to Miami, Florida. In Maryland, we use 72 million gallons of fuel to power lawn care equipment.¹ The State should be a leader in moving away from fossil-fuel powered lawn care equipment as a step toward achieving the State's ambitious GHG reduction goals.

¹ ["Montgomery County's Leaf Blower Law – What does it mean for Me?"](#) MyGreenMontgomery.org, October 4, 2023.

Health Impacts

Gas-powered lawn care equipment has several health impacts, but the two primary impacts that would benefit from switching to electric equipment are reductions in **noise** exposure to workers and reductions in **air pollutant** emissions.

For example, although electric leaf blowers generate some noise, in general, it is substantially lower than gas-powered blowers. The noise exposure rating of gas-powered leaf blowers is generally over 100 dB, above the recommended occupational noise level without protective equipment.² For workers, cumulative elevated noise exposure over time causes noise-induced hearing loss and tinnitus (ringing of the ears) and associated emotional changes. Long term exposure relates to cognitive deficits, high blood pressure, heart disease, and painful sensitivity to loud noises. Some of these effects can be reduced by consistently wearing hearing protection, however reducing noise exposure in the first place is always more effective.

Reducing air emissions from gas-powered lawn equipment also could contribute to better health among workers and the community in general.³ Gas combustion engines, especially two-stroke engines that don't have the controls found on cars, produce particulate and other pollutants such as carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxides. Electric equipment has generally no air emissions. Workers are exposed to these pollutants, because they are very close to the equipment and breathe the exhaust. Fine particulates associated with gasoline engines are risk factors for causing or exacerbating asthma, chronic lung disease, heart disease, acute heart effects such as disrupting heart rhythms, and stroke. Pollutants such as nitrogen oxides and volatile organic chemicals are especially prominent with two-stroke engines, and are known risks for circulatory and lung disease. There are other potential direct health impacts from gas-powered leaf blowers, including dust that contains plants, allergens, or pesticide residues.

All of these environmental and worker health impacts would be reduced with a transition to electric equipment. Therefore, we recommend a **FAVORABLE** report for HB0091 in committee.

350MoCo

Adat Shalom Climate Action

Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church Environmental Justice Ministry

Chesapeake Earth Holders

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility

Climate Parents of Prince George's

² Walker, Erica and Jamie L. Banks. [Characteristics of Lawn and Garden Equipment Sound: A Community Pilot Study](#). Journal of Environmental Toxicology Studies. December 2017; 1(1): 10.16966/2576-6430.106.

³ Thomson, Vivian and Kit Gage. ["Opinion: Landscape workers' health is at risk in Montgomery County."](#) Maryland Matters. April 12, 2023.

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ClimateXChange – Rebuild Maryland Coalition
Coming Clean Network, Union of Concerned Scientists
DoTheMostGood Montgomery County
Echotopia
Elders Climate Action
Fix Maryland Rail
Glen Echo Heights Mobilization
Greenbelt Climate Action Network
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