



February 7, 2025

HB701 Gasoline-Powered Leaf Blowers - Purchase, Use and Sale - Prohibitions (Clean Air Quiet Communities Act)
Economic Matters Committee February 11, 2025
FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Wilson, Vice-Chair Crosby and Honorable Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

The Green Towson Alliance writes in support of HB701 which phases out state use of gasoline-powered leaf blowers and prohibits sale of new gasoline-powered leaf blowers starting in 2027. Our members feel strongly it's time for the era of two-stroke gasoline powered leaf blowers to come to an end. We are concerned about the pollutants these machines emit due to their contribution to climate change and their impact on our children and elderly neighbors. Air quality is a very local issue for us as Baltimore has significantly higher rates of asthma, with the hospitalization rate for asthma among adult residents in Baltimore City approximately 3.3 times higher than the hospitalization rate for Maryland adults. Gas-powered leaf blowers also affect those who play sports or take part in outdoor recreation, as the fumes, noise, and potential of being 'sprayed' with the debris blown in the air discourages healthy exercise affecting our health and well-being.

Studies have found that high-decibel noise, such as that created by gas-powered leaf blowers, can result in stress related illnesses such as high blood pressure, speech interference, hearing loss, and sleep disruption. The stress associated with loud noise can also affect birds, bees and other wildlife that visit our yards and neighborhoods. Insects are a primary food source for birds and amphibians, and some studies estimate that the insect population in the United States has declined by as much as 40% since 1970 because of environmental stressors which include soil erosion caused by overuse of gas-powered leaf blowers.

There's another element to the use of gas-powered leaf blowers. It's a general feeling that somehow our communities have lost a sense of neighborliness. A person who powers up a two-stroke gas-powered leaf blower creates deafening noise and fumes that can't be escaped. Our members who have neighbors that use these loud leaf-blowers say they can't enjoy their yards when these leaf-blowers are in use. The noise is so loud it permeates nearby homes, and neighbors have no choice but to tolerate it. Though we cannot legislate good manners and neighborliness, we can phase out two-stroke gasoline leaf blowers and restore a good measure of peacefulness and healthier air to our communities.

Cities and counties around the U.S. have begun to restrict the use of gasoline-powered leaf blowers. With Maryland working hard to achieve a 60% reduction in climate emissions by 2031 and reach net zero emissions by 2045, the state needs to move toward readily-available and energy-efficient battery powered alternatives. Additionally, the state must stop exposing its landscape workers to the many health hazards these blowers cause, especially when cost effective alternatives are available.

We ask for a favorable report on HB701 as an important step toward the goal of a greener, healthier Maryland for all.

Respectfully,

Patty Mochel for the Green Towson Alliance

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The Green Towson Alliance unites Towson area environmentalists to create a greener, healthier and more beautiful community through collaboration and activism.