



Maryland Green Industries Council
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House Bill 701 – Gasoline-Powered Leaf Blowers – Purchase, Use, and Sale - Prohibitions

Committee: Economic Matters

Position: OPPOSE

The Maryland Green Industries Council (MaGIC) represents a wide array of professionals in the green industry, including arborists, lawn and landscape experts, and nursery and greenhouse growers. We are deeply concerned about House Bill 701, which prohibits the state from purchasing gasoline-powered leaf blowers starting January 1, 2025, and from using them by January 1, 2026. Additionally, the bill prohibits the sale of gasoline-powered leaf blowers in Maryland beginning January 1, 2027, and restricts state contractors and subcontractors from utilizing gasoline-powered leaf blowers starting May 1, 2027.

MaGIC's opposition to this bill is based on the harmful effects it would have on small businesses that contract with the state for lawn and landscape services. The bill's prohibition on state contractors using gasoline-powered leaf blowers would make it prohibitively expensive and, in some cases, logistically impossible for many of these small businesses to maintain their contracts with the state of Maryland. The core issues associated with this transition are cost, the availability of commercial-grade battery-powered equipment, and the logistics of battery life and disposal.

1. Disproportionate Impact on Small Businesses

This bill would disproportionately benefit large companies with the financial resources to make the transition to battery-powered equipment, while small businesses would be left at a severe disadvantage. Commercial-grade battery-powered leaf blowers are up to 50% more expensive than their gasoline-powered counterparts. Not only would this legislation require businesses to invest in significantly more expensive equipment, but it would also force them to make a substantial upfront investment in this transition, well before the May 1, 2027 deadline.

Furthermore, contractors would need to invest in additional batteries, chargers, and mobile recharging infrastructure. For example, one backpack leaf blower would require nine fully charged batteries to complete a full eight-hour workday. This additional cost is a significant burden on small businesses that may already operate on thin margins.

2. Inadequate Performance of Battery-Powered Equipment

Commercial-grade battery-powered leaf blowers are currently not as powerful or efficient as their gasoline-powered counterparts. These battery-powered models take longer to complete the same tasks,

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which means jobs will take more time and may require additional manpower. The batteries typically last for only an hour or so, which forces contractors to make frequent stops to swap out and recharge batteries during a workday. While this might be feasible for occasional, homeowner use, it is entirely impractical for commercial businesses that need to service large properties efficiently.

3. Charging Logistics and the Strain on Maryland's Power Grid

The logistical challenges of battery life and charging only add to the costs associated with this bill. For example, the District of Columbia, which has already banned gasoline-powered leaf blowers, now requires a generator truck to follow its crews, recharging batteries throughout the day. Contractors in Maryland would face a choice: either purchase multiple batteries for each piece of equipment to be recharged nightly, or rely on gas-powered generators to recharge equipment throughout the day. The latter option would add additional costs and emissions. Furthermore, the added charging infrastructure would place even greater strain on Maryland's already overburdened power grid.

4. Environmental and Ethical Concerns with Battery Production and Disposal

Our members are also concerned about the environmental impact of the mining practices used to produce batteries, as well as the uncertainties around battery recycling when their useful life expires. A commercial battery-powered leaf blower typically has a battery life of about 1,200 hours, or approximately six months of commercial use before it needs to be replaced. This raises concerns about the long-term sustainability of transitioning to battery-powered equipment, as the disposal of used batteries may create environmental hazards.

5. Impact on Maryland Businesses and Sales

This legislation would also have a negative impact on Maryland businesses that sell gasoline-powered leaf blowers, as they would lose sales to neighboring states where these products would still be available.

While this bill, in its current form, only affects the state government, contractors, and consumers who would no longer be able to purchase gasoline-powered leaf blowers in Maryland, proponents have made it clear that this is "just the first step" toward a statewide ban on gasoline-powered leaf blowers. This could have a far-reaching negative impact on the broader lawn and landscape industry in Maryland.

Conclusion

MaGIC respectfully urges lawmakers to reconsider House Bill 701 due to its disproportionate economic impact on small businesses, its logistical challenges, and the potential environmental consequences associated with battery-powered equipment. We are committed to exploring environmentally responsible solutions, but we believe this bill, as currently written, would place an undue burden on our industry and negatively affect the quality and affordability of services for Maryland residents.

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