

Dear Maryland House of Representatives,

My name is Mercedes Horn and I am a professional landscaper and gardener living in Montgomery County, Maryland. I am writing to ask you to support HB0701 and to address arguments some of my fellow landscapers may have against the bill. HB0701 should be passed because gas powered leaf blowers are unhealthy, noisy, bad-smelling pieces of out of date technology with an extremely viable and affordable alternative: the electric leaf blower.

First and foremost, gas powered leaf blowers should be banned because they endanger the health of the landscapers who use them. They are known to emit high levels of carcinogenic chemicals and intense air pollution in the areas where they are used. As landscapers work they hold these carcinogen emitting machines directly in their arms, putting them at higher risk of harm from their emissions than anyone else affected. Unfortunately, not all landscapers, especially those employed by larger companies, have a choice as to what kind of leaf blower their employers ask them to work with. To protect these landscapers, gas powered leaf blowers must be banned. Secondly, gas powered leaf blowers endanger the health of those who live in the neighborhoods where they are used. As they are used, the carcinogenic chemicals and high levels of air pollution they emit build up in the air around them. Every time I am working or walking in my neighborhood and I see a mom with a baby in a stroller walk by a crew of landscapers using gas powered leaf blowers, I cringe. I know that the baby in that stroller now has a higher risk of developing asthma and childhood cancer just because a property owner wanted some leaves moved around.

There is really no good excuse for this. As landscape professionals we have two excellent alternatives to the gas powered leaf blower available to us. The first is the rake, which while a bit slow, emits no fumes and causes no noise pollution. The second is the electric powered leaf blower. I work with one in my operation and have found it to be just as effective as a gas powered leaf blower and cheaper to maintain. All I have to pay for to keep it running is a few cents for the electricity to charge its convenient, long lasting batteries. Working with a gas powered leaf blower, I had to spend several dollars a day on gasoline to keep my leaf blower fueled. I also found my electric leaf blower very affordable to buy. My machine was about 200 dollars. I can easily make that much money in just one day. My operation is a small one person operation, so I didn't have access to any bulk discounts when I bought my electric leaf blower. I expect that larger operations with access to bulk discounts will be able to buy machines for even cheaper prices. Finally, my electric leaf blower was really easy to learn how to use. After I bought mine, it took me about 90 seconds to learn how to use the controls, and about 60 seconds to learn how to charge the battery. So no special training will be required to teach employees how to use electric leaf blowers. With all these factors in mind, making the switch to electric leaf blowers should be very affordable for the landscaping companies in the state who have not already done it.

I was able to easily afford the switch though my operation is tiny (one person) and I am sometimes not able to work full time due to life circumstances. Moreover, the University of Maryland system was able to successfully make the switch though their landscaping needs are

extensive and they likely had to buy many new leaf blowers. This suggests to me that if other landscapers view the cost of switching to electric leaf blowers as prohibitive, it is not because the cost of electric leaf blowers is really a hardship. It is because their businesses were already ailing due to poor business management practices, such as not showing adequate care for their employees, their clients, or the communities they work in. In that case, though they may be initially opposed, I cannot see encouraging them to switch to machines that are better for their employees and clients as anything but a boon to their operations.

Thank you so much for considering my testimony. I am so grateful for the work you do every day to try to improve the lives of your fellow Marylanders.

Sincerely,

Mercedes Horn