

**Testimony: HB701, Gasoline-Powered Leaf Blowers - Purchase, Use, and Sale -
Prohibitions (Clean Air Quiet Communities Act)**

Committee: Economic Matters

Hearing Date: February 11, 2025

Position: SUPPORT

I support House Bill 701 banning gas-powered leaf blowers as a resident and homeowner in Maryland. In 2021 I first tried out some battery-powered garden equipment and was so pleased with the experience that I switched out all of my personal garden equipment to electric and battery-operated versions by the end of that year. I find battery/electric equipment to be more reliable and much quieter and enjoyable to use. Additionally I feel more comfortable about not having to store and handle gasoline for yard maintenance.

Aside from my personal experience, I also have a great deal of professional experience with this equipment in my job as a supervisory horticulturist at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMD) where I have used both gas-powered, and battery-powered leaf blowers, as well as supervising groundskeepers and landscape contractors who use this equipment and have completed the transition to using battery-operated handheld and backpack blowers.

UMD converted to all battery-powered handheld and backpack leaf blowers in the Fall of 2022, with campus contractors being required to switch to battery powered equipment in Spring 2023. We find that the equipment is more reliable than gas-powered leaf blowers and results in many fewer complaints from the UMD community. Battery-powered blowers require virtually no maintenance. In contrast, gasoline equipment is in the repair shop every month or two, and needs regular oil changes. Battery-powered leaf blowers are less expensive to operate due to the lower maintenance and no more need for gas and oil.

Use of battery-powered blowers has led to a substantial improvement for the community: the workers, professors, students, and staff.

Years ago I was a UMD student living on campus in the residence halls. My number one complaint living on campus was being woken up or disrupted while studying by noisy leaf blowers and other loud equipment. I found I could not study, think, sleep, or even hear conversations when loud gas blowers were used around my living or community spaces. I feel the same way now living in suburban Maryland, about the noise level of my neighbors when they use gas-powered landscape equipment. I have long felt that reducing noisy equipment use improves the wellbeing of people living in many different types of communities.

Now, I supervise about 12 campus landscape staff, comprised mostly of groundskeepers, as well as landscape contractors who are collectively responsible for

leaf removal, keeping sidewalks clear, and other landscape maintenance on our large College Park campus. My workers appreciate battery powered leaf blowers because they are quieter, less damaging to their hearing, and create a more pleasant work environment. Also, the workers don't go home smelling of gasoline, and the equipment is more reliable.

People come up to me all the time to say how much they appreciate the improvements to campus in terms of a quieter and more peaceful community, as well as reduced exhaust and gasoline smells in our community from landscape equipment.

I respectfully request a favorable report for House Bill 701.

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