

I write in favor of HB701 which, I believe, is actually extremely modest. Ultimately, I would hope that the state pursues much more stringent standards regarding leaf blowers - as you no doubt know, many municipalities across the state and country have already banned gas powered leaf blowers. The environmental degradation these implements cause regarding air quality is well known and well established. But just as pernicious is the noise pollution, a genuine quality of life issue. I am not naive; I live in Towson (a wonderful suburb) and, as such, I do not expect complete quiet 24 hours a day. But without question, over the past few years the din of leaf blowers is a virtual daily constant, often from sun up to sun down, for roughly 10 months a year, if not more. As many others since the pandemic, I work a fair number of hours from home. As a community college professor, I teach many of my classes through zoom. This has become almost impossible in the last few semesters. Even closing all my windows does not drown out the ear-splitting noise. I believe that for many citizens in Maryland, one of the joys of living in this wonderful state, with its four seasons and mild climate, is being able to be outside and enjoy access to nature. That, too, has become a virtual impossibility; I am constantly chased back inside by the never-ending din of leaf blowers. Ironically, the only time of the year these aren't employed daily is January-February (though some people do use these for snow removal) when most folks aren't sitting outside anyway. Again, I get it: people have a "right" to clear their lawns (though the upside to not doing so, and especially not using a machine that churns up pollutants, is well-documented) but why we have gotten to the point where this "right" to pollute with impunity has trumped the right to occasional peace and quiet and not be assaulted by noise and air particulates stumps me. We deserve better. It is very much a quality of life issue, and the rapid proliferation of these machines has made modern life almost intolerable for many of us. Please do the right thing: there is a reason municipalities all over the country have banned these pernicious machines—the "good" they provide is drastically outweighed by the harm they cause. Thank you.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Evan Balkan', with a stylized, cursive script.