



Delegate C. T. Wilson, *Chair*
 Delegate Brian M. Crosby, *Vice-Chair*
 House Economic Matters Committee
 230 Taylor House Office Building
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, *Chair*
 Delegate Bonnie Cullison, *Vice-Chair*
 House Health & Government Operations Committee
 House Office Building, Room 241
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: *House Bill 701: Gasoline-Powered Leaf Blowers - Purchase, Use, and Sale - Prohibitions (Clean Air Quiet Communities Act) – OPPOSED*

February 11, 2025

Dear Chairman Wilson, Chairwoman Pena-Melnyk and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Maryland Turfgrass Council (MTC), we write this letter in *opposition* of House Bill 701: Gasoline-Powered Leaf Blowers - Purchase, Use, and Sale - Prohibitions (Clean Air Quiet Communities Act).

The Maryland Turfgrass Council (MTC) is a non-profit organization that represents all areas of the turf industry including golf, sports turf, sod producers, landscape, lawncare and commercial vendors and suppliers.

As written, HB 701 prohibits would prohibit the State from entering into or renewing a contract under which the contractor, or a subcontractor employed by the contractor, uses of gas-powered leaf blowers beginning May 1, 2027. Moreover, if enacted HB would also progressively ban the sale of gas leaf blowers, statewide by 2027, thereby limiting purchase, use, and choice on both Maryland businesses and residents. If enacted this bill would also restrict the State from purchasing said blowers, starting on July 1st of this year.

MTC opposes this legislation for several reasons – including the economical and long-term environmental impacts. The intent for migrating this equipment to be fully electric (i.e. batteries), statewide, is laudable. However, there are many unresolved issues that will make this transition extremely difficult and costly for locally based companies as well as the state under this provision of the bill.

For many small landscaping businesses (operating in Maryland), this provision will not only create financial hardship but will also significantly reduce competitive viability in the state's procurement marketplace. Companies that would typically compete for state contracts would be disqualified from

bidding due to these new prohibitions, thereby resulting in a drastic undercut of competition to only a selected few that have the financial resources to meet this bill's new mandate. The cost of the equipment and the added infrastructure will result in many companies selling their business to larger, commercial operators who can afford these expenditures. Alternatively, their other option will be to increase their price of services to absorb the cost of the new batteries and equipment, in order to pursue future business relations with the State.

For the State, the results will likely be a reduction in the turnaround time for contractors to get projects completed as well as experiencing an increased waiting time between jobs as it takes longer to complete jobs with electric powered equipment with charging times for commercial equipment taking longer. The options for keeping production time reasonable may result in two options. Option one is buying more batteries, which adds to up-front costs, or option two which is to use a gas-powered generator to charge the batteries between jobs, which goes against what this bill is attempting to do. The new bill prohibits using gas generators to charge batteries for leaf blowers

To put in perspective, pricing a gas-powered backpack blower is \$550, the price for an equivalent battery backpack blower with the long-life backpack battery is \$1,300.00. The battery kits alone are \$400.00. This is for the EGO LBX 6000, which offers the best battery to power comparison. With that battery will last for around 1 hour. The problem is that it also takes an hour to charge those batteries which results in needing more batteries and more power to charge those batteries. This all leads to longer wait times between jobs and overall, less efficient use of company time and resources. This is a very brief example of the economic impact from this bill, the other side of it is if the state municipalities cannot subcontract to businesses who are not operating battery equipment, then they could suffer heavy losses of income to keep their companies afloat and thriving.

Environmental impacts from gas-powered emissions are there but the newer machines are running more and more efficiently. The batteries from the electric equipment are both costly to make and there is no real disposal system in place for all the batteries outside of putting them in the landfill which can lead to them cracking and leaking and further contaminating the ground water. The noise levels of the blowers are comparable when you are close to them. Both require ear protection while wearing them and the ANSI ratings are taken from 75 ft away. The Battery powered EGO Power LBX 6000 is rated at 66 dB and the gasoline Husqvarna 360 BT is 60 db. These two are comparable in power, weight, and running time. The noise levels are very similar from the same distance which makes the real difference between them the cost and effectiveness of the blowers in the long run.

If the bill sponsor's intentions are to curb noise pollution, prohibiting the use or sale of gas-powered leaf blowers on state contractors (and future Maryland residents) does nothing to increase quiet enjoyment and reduce noise disturbances, pursuant to Maryland COMAR 26.02.03.02 – Environmental Noise Standards. This COMAR section sets forth specific rules and restrictions to noise above certain levels that are harmful to the health of the general public – these standards are set forth within 26.02.03.02 (A) and (B) (see below).

.02 Environmental Noise Standards.

A. Precepts.

(1) It is known that noise above certain levels are harmful to the health of humans. Although precise levels at which all adverse health effects occur have not definitely been ascertained, it is known that

one's wellbeing can be affected by noise through loss of sleep, speech interference, hearing impairment, and a variety of other psychological and physiological factors. The establishment of ambient noise standards, or goals, must provide margins of safety in reaching conclusions based on available data which relate noise exposure to health and welfare effects, with due consideration to technical and economic factors.

(2) The environmental noise standards set forth here represent goals expressed in terms of equivalent A-weighted sound levels which are protective of the public health and welfare. The ambient noise levels shall be achieved through application, under provisions of laws or regulations or otherwise, of means for reducing noise levels including, but not limited to, isolation of noise producing equipment, dampening of sound waves by insulation, equipment modification and redesign, and land use management.

B. Standards for Environmental Noise — General.

(1) A person may not cause or permit noise levels which exceed those specified in this table except as provided in §B(2) or (3), or §C, of this regulation.

Table 1- Maximum Allowable Noise Levels (dBA) for Receiving Land Use Categories

Day/Night	Industrial	Commercial	Residential
Day	75	67	65
Night	75	62	55

(2) A person may not cause or permit noise levels emanating from construction or demolition site activities which exceed:

- (a) 90 dBA during daytime hours;
- (b) The levels specified in Table 1 during nighttime hours.

(3) A person may not cause or permit the emission of prominent discrete tones and periodic noises which exceed a level which is 5 dBA lower than the applicable level listed in Table 1.

(4) A person may not cause or permit, beyond the property line of a source, vibration of sufficient intensity to cause another person to be aware of the vibration by such direct means as sensation of touch or visual observation of moving objects. The observer shall be located at or within the property line of the receiving property when vibration determinations are made.

(5) A person may not operate or permit to be operated an off-road internal combustion engine powered recreational vehicle, including, but not limited to, a dirt bike, an all-terrain vehicle, a go cart, a snowmobile, or a similar vehicle, on private property closer than 300 feet to a neighboring residence or the associated curtilage, without the written permission of the affected resident, unless it can be demonstrated to the Department that the vehicle can be operated within the noise limits specified in Table 1 under §B(1) of this regulation.

The State COMAR's standards are very clear not only the restrictions regarding noise levels, but as to the variety of activities that are exempt. **Under 26.02.03.02 (C)(2)(b)**, it states that "***lawn care and snow removal equipment (daytime only) when used and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications***" are exempt from State COMAR Environmental Noise Standards.

As written, HB is inconsistent with the well-established noise limitations exemption (under COMAR), for lawn care equipment. Even if this legislation were to prohibit the sale and use of gas-powered leaf blowers, any impact to reduce or mitigate noise-levels would be insignificant, when considering that electric blowers (and other lawn care equipment) still emit loud noise and are also permitted to exceed the DBA levels set forth in COMAR for commercial and residential purposes.

For these reasons, MTC are opposed to HB 701. Until there is better and more efficient commercial-grade equipment on the market this bill will do far more harm than good for the state of Maryland.

Sincerely,



Brandon Sands, *President*
Maryland Turfgrass Council (MTC)