



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

Economic Matters Committee

February 11, 2025

FAVORABLE

Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby and honorable members of the Committee,

The Maryland Native Plant Coalition writes in support of HB701, the Clean Air Quiet Communities Act. HB701 asks the state to lead in the effort to phase out the use of gas-powered leaf blowers which cause harm to our citizens, landscape workers and our environment.

Our organization conducted a survey in the fall of 2024 to gauge attitudes toward the use of leaf blowers - gas, electric and corded. We received almost 800 responses from all over Maryland, and the overwhelming majority of respondents expressed their dislike and frustration with both the noise and fumes generated by gas-powered leaf blowers (GPBLs). GPBLs generate noise in the range of 90 to 110 dB, similar to operating a jackhammer or being in the front row at a rock concert. 90% of survey respondents said this noise not only makes their outdoor spaces unusable but also intrudes into their homes, thereby disrupting work, conversation and even sleep for those working nights.

"I work from home and when landscapers are in the neighborhood using leaf blowers, my productivity is greatly decreased because the high volume of noise is extremely distracting and makes it difficult to hear colleagues on calls." – Charles County Resident

Where houses are close together, the noise permeates the entire area. ...between the mower and the blower multiple times a week, there is never a quiet moment.
– Caroline County Resident

"We now live in a world of noise. It is a constant assault and leaf blowers are the worst culprits. They are completely unnecessary (rakes work just fine) and they contribute dramatically to noise and air pollution. They have in recent years become an almost constant scourge and are the most pernicious form of environmental degradation around." – Baltimore County Resident

72% of survey respondents reported increases in stress and anxiety when gas-powered leaf blowers are used near their homes. Due to the dust and debris kicked up by the blowing

process, respondents reported throat irritation and coughing (41%) and asthma and other respiratory issues when around leaf blowers in use (20%). Concern for the health of the operators of GPLBs was also frequently expressed.

“Even from a block away, they disturb us inside our house, causing headaches, stress, and inability to concentrate. They are a complete menace and should be banned for all residents and for the incredible environmental damage they cause.”

- Montgomery County Resident

“My main concern is the health impacts - both respiratory and hearing-related - on low income and minority workers, many of whom lack health insurance. Any gardening worker who uses a leaf blower all day will have hearing loss when they are older, and the cost of good hearing aids is currently out of reach for many of them.”

- Montgomery County Resident

Many respondents commented on the loss of use of their property and damage to their property when leaf blowers are being operated:

“The noise makes it impossible to enjoy being outdoors, and I don't want to be around the noise or the nasty fumes.” – Howard County Resident

“They interfere with my use of the patio for eating or just relaxing. Even if they are being used in the neighbor's yard several hundred yards away.” -Montgomery County Resident

“The leaf blowers have caused damage (scratches and dirt) to my vehicle and have damaged native plants that I have planted in front of my home. The constant leaf blowing (at least weekly, often multiple times per week) has also resulted in erosion issues.” – Charles County Resident

The harm caused by gas-powered leaf blowers so far outweighs any benefits they provide, especially when those very same benefits can be achieved by a cleaner, quieter, more reliable alternative in the form of a battery-operated model. Further, that battery-operated model is actually more cost effective over its lifetime. Marylanders recognize the downsides of gas-powered leaf blowers and an impressive **80%** of our survey respondents asked for restrictions on their use. We ask that the state provide leadership in phasing out the use of these harmful devices.

The Maryland Native Plant Coalition asks for a FAVORABLE report on HB701.

Respectfully,

Kirsten Hoffman on behalf of the Maryland Native Plant Coalition

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The Maryland Native Plant Coalition is comprised of environmental organizations who come together to promote sustainable environmental practices through advocacy, education and outreach.

Leaf Blower Survey

Conducted by the Maryland Native Plant Coalition Summer/Fall 2024
Selected Results from 769 Responses

