

Testimony in Opposition to HB0701

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Presented by Amanda Kilpatrick

Southern Maryland Outdoor Power Equipment

Honorable Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

My name is Amanda Kilpatrick, my husband and I own Southern Maryland Outdoor Power Equipment in Waldorf, Maryland. We have been in business since 2005, providing sales, service, and repairs for outdoor power equipment to landscapers, farmers, and homeowners across Southern Maryland. I am here today to strongly oppose HB0701, as it will hurt small businesses, eliminate jobs, and increase costs for both businesses and residents.

This bill does not just ban gas-powered blowers—it threatens the livelihoods of many Marylanders by forcing landscapers, farmers, and equipment dealers into costly transitions that many cannot afford. It will force small businesses to lay off employees, raise costs for essential landscaping services, and push equipment sales and tax revenue to neighboring states.

Impact on Jobs in Landscaping and Equipment Dealerships

This bill will have a severe impact on employment in both the landscaping industry and power equipment dealerships. The landscaping industry, which relies on gas-powered equipment, will be forced to make costly upgrades to battery-powered alternatives. Many landscapers, especially single-owner and minority-owned businesses, operate on tight margins and will be unable to afford the transition. As a result, many small landscaping businesses will be forced to lay off workers or shut down altogether.

Power equipment dealerships, like mine, will also face significant losses. A large portion of our business depends on the sale and servicing of gas-powered equipment. Unlike gas-powered equipment, battery-powered alternatives are often not repairable, meaning that service work and parts sales will decline. If this bill passes, dealerships will experience a drop in equipment sales, parts revenue, and repair work. This will result in job losses for mechanics, service technicians, warehouse employees, and sales staff.

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Cost Difference, Power, and Performance of Gas vs. Battery-Powered Blowers

The cost and performance differences between gas and battery-powered blowers are significant.

- A **commercial gas-powered blower** costs **\$600 to \$700** and provides **consistent power throughout the workday** with minimal downtime.
- A **commercial battery-powered blower** costs **\$2,500 or more**, with **extra batteries costing \$1,500 each**.
- A **gas-powered blower can be refueled in minutes and run all day**, while a **battery-powered blower runs for 30 to 60 minutes before needing a battery swap or recharge**.
- **Landscapers need multiple extra batteries** to match the runtime of a gas-powered blower, meaning that a full setup can cost over **\$10,000 per crew**.

Battery-powered blowers **do not match the power output of gas-powered models**, making them less effective for tasks such as **leaf removal, large-scale commercial properties, and wet or heavy debris**. The additional costs, combined with decreased efficiency, will **increase labor costs and extend job completion times**, further raising prices for Marylanders.

The financial burden of this bill will extend beyond business owners to Maryland residents, particularly seniors, individuals with disabilities, and lower-income homeowners who rely on affordable landscaping services.

Currently, gas-powered equipment allows landscapers to provide cost-effective services. If landscapers are forced to switch to battery-powered equipment, their operating costs will rise due to the high cost of battery-powered alternatives and the need for multiple battery packs to complete a full day's work. These increased costs will inevitably be passed on to customers, making essential services such as lawn maintenance and leaf removal significantly more expensive.

For residents on fixed incomes, these price increases will make routine landscaping services unaffordable. This could lead to properties being left unmaintained, impacting both individual homeowners and the overall appearance and upkeep of communities.

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Loss of Business to Neighboring States

HB0701 will not stop people from using gas-powered equipment; it will simply push business across state lines. Many Maryland landscapers and homeowners have already indicated that if this bill passes, they will purchase gas-powered equipment in Virginia or Pennsylvania.

This will result in a direct loss of sales for Maryland businesses and a reduction in state tax revenue. The economic impact will not just be felt by dealerships but by the state itself, as Maryland businesses lose customers to neighboring states.

Unfair Competitive Disadvantage

This bill creates an unfair disadvantage for small businesses, landscapers, and equipment dealerships. While private businesses will be forced to transition away from gas-powered equipment, certain state agencies will still be allowed to use gas-powered blowers.

This raises a critical question: **Who will sell them their blowers?**

If Maryland bans gas blowers for private businesses but still allows state agencies to use them, where will those agencies purchase their equipment? Dealers like mine, who depend on gas-powered equipment sales, will be forced into an unfair position. This creates an uneven playing field where private businesses suffer while government agencies continue to operate as usual.

If gas-powered equipment is still necessary for state agencies, then why is it being banned for private businesses? This bill does not offer fairness or consistency, and it disproportionately harms the small businesses that keep Maryland running.

Maryland's Budget Deficit and the Burden on Small Businesses

Maryland is already facing a budget deficit, and many small businesses and residents are struggling with rising costs. This bill imposes an additional financial burden at a time when businesses can least afford it.

Forcing landscapers, farmers, and small businesses to spend thousands of dollars on new equipment that is often less effective than gas-powered alternatives is not a responsible course of action. Additionally, state agencies will still be permitted to use gas-powered equipment, raising serious concerns about fairness. If gas-powered tools are still necessary for government operations, why should private businesses and homeowners be required to give them up?

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A More Balanced Approach

Rather than imposing a costly mandate, Maryland should focus on a more balanced and practical approach. Investing in improved battery technology, providing incentives for businesses that choose to transition voluntarily, and ensuring that regulations apply fairly to both private businesses and government agencies would be a more effective strategy.

Conclusion

HB0701 will have a devastating effect on Maryland's small businesses, particularly those in the landscaping and power equipment industries. It will eliminate jobs, increase costs for homeowners, and push business out of the state. This bill creates unnecessary financial hardships for businesses and residents, many of whom are already struggling in the current economy.

Furthermore, it creates an unfair system where private businesses are forced into costly transitions while state agencies continue using gas-powered equipment. If gas-powered blowers are still necessary for the government, then they are still necessary for the businesses and workers who maintain Maryland's homes and properties.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to reject HB0701 and instead pursue policies that support innovation without harming Maryland businesses, workers, and consumers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Amanda Kilpatrick