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Committee

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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony: HB167 - Gasoline-Powered Leaf Blowers - Purchase and Use - Prohibitions

Committee: Government, Labor, and Elections

Hearing Date: February 17, 2026

Position: Favorable

I am Delegate Linda Foley and I am presenting HB167 - Gasoline-Powered Leaf Blowers - Purchase and Use - Prohibitions.

HB167 slowly phases out the use of gas-powered leaf blowers on state property by state agencies and state contractors. This bill has the state leading by example.

The bill would require the state government, or any contractor or subcontractor employed by the State working on State-Owned land, to transition to electric leaf-blowers as current devices are replaced. They must convert all their blowers to electric by January 1, 2031. The bill also requires them to comply with local gas leaf blower ordinances in place across the state.

To be clear, this bill is not a statewide ban on use of gas-powered leaf blowers, nor would it directly affect individual consumers or homeowners. It also would not affect farmers.

In addition, HB167 makes several exemptions for state agencies, including for wildland fire suppression activities, prescribed burn management activities, fire-fighting activities carried out by authorized personnel, and emergency response activities.

I have worked with various state agencies on this bill and have tried to address their concerns. I will continue to work with them if needed.

The Climate Solutions Now Act, passed by the General Assembly in 2022, one of the most consequential laws in the country on the effects of climate change, sets ambitious goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The act calls for a 60% reduction below 2006 levels of fossil-fuel emissions by 2031 and a further goal of net-zero emissions by 2045.

To accomplish this, the climate law includes measures regarding building energy standards, state passenger fleet electrification and a pilot electric school bus program, among many other initiatives. But we will need more emission-reducing measures to reach these goals.

In Maryland, gas-powered lawn care equipment puts out smog-forming pollutants equivalent to that of 6.4 million cars. There are 5 million cars and light duty vehicles registered in Maryland.

Eighty-five percent of the pollution from lawn care equipment comes from devices with 2-cycle engines, like leaf blowers. A gas leaf blower running for one hour emits smog-forming pollution comparable to driving a Toyota Camry 1,100 miles -- about the distance from D.C. to Miami. A gas leaf blower engine emits nearly 300 times the hydrocarbons of a pickup truck and releases excessive carbon monoxide and nitrous oxides.

If Marylanders were to electrify all their two-cycle lawn care devices, it would be equivalent to taking more than 5 million cars off the road. This would markedly improve the health of Marylanders and reduce health-care costs. This bill is much more modest but it would begin to reduce the harmful effects of hydrocarbons in our air.

Fortunately, electric and battery-powered leaf blowers are widely available. They are powerful but much quieter than gasoline-powered ones. They are comparable in purchase price and have far lower operating costs. They are essentially maintenance-free. More importantly, a transition to electric-powered leaf blowers will improve the health and safety of the state workers who regularly use these devices and regularly breathe in these harmful pollutants.

Gas leaf blowers are also a source of dangerous levels of noise for users or anyone else near them. Decibels are on a logarithmic scale, so every increase of 10 decibels is a 10-fold increase in noise. Electric leaf blowers typically emit well under 75 decibels. In comparison, gas leaf blowers emit 90-112 decibels, roughly a 100-fold increase, which damages hearing, impacts sleep, creates tension, increases blood pressure and affects human hearts. Just two hours of noise at 85 decibels, or 15 minutes at 100 decibels, exceeds NIOSH (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health) standards and can cause hearing damage, especially for those operating the devices.

This damaging level of noise also affects countless species of wildlife, like birds, and even pets.

The state already budgets to replace the leaf blowers at the end of their useful life. While extra batteries needed for some professional users can be expensive, significant fuel savings are expected to more than offset any upfront costs.

We have worked with the Department of Natural Resources, along with other state agencies to address previous issues with the bill. We continue to be committed to being partners in change.

Many jurisdictions in the state already have recognized the benefits of converting to electric blowers, including Chevy Chase, Somerset, Takoma Park, University Park, Hyattsville, Annapolis, Baltimore City, Anne Arundel County and Montgomery County. Each of these have limited the use of gas-powered leaf blowers. Washington, D.C. has had a ban on gas blowers in place for several years. Other jurisdictions around Maryland are considering limitations.

HB167 is the first step in the right direction to reduce the environmental impact of gas-powered leaf blowers. It will help put Maryland on the right path toward quieter communities and cleaner air. I urge a favorable report. Thank you.