

Committee: Government, Labor and Elections

Testimony on: HB167 Gasoline-Powered Leaf Blowers – Purchase and Use – Prohibitions (Clean Air Quiet Communities Act)

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 17, 2026

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club strongly supports **HB167 Gasoline-Powered Leaf Blowers – Purchase and Use – Prohibitions (Clean Air Quiet Communities Act)**, which requires the State to phase out gas-powered leaf blower usage on State property by January 1, 2031. This transition ensures our State parks, universities, and public spaces are quieter and healthier while providing long-term operating savings to the State and supporting healthier workers. Crucially, this bill focuses on **State-led leadership and does not prohibit use on private property**.

Gas-powered leaf blowers inflict significant harm on operators and the public alike. It has become increasingly difficult for Marylanders to escape this localized noise and air pollution in our homes, workplaces, and schools. The resulting air and noise pollution causes known physical and mental harm and our residents are actively seeking relief, as evidenced by numerous local ordinances covering over a quarter of Marylanders.

HB167 is a small step toward advancing the adoption of electric leaf blowers. It would only affect activity on State property and it does not affect use on private or municipal land. The bill is expected to ultimately create budget savings – as electric leaf blowers have lower operational costs than gas-powered models and reduce harm to workers. The bill provides does not require immediate adoption of electric models, and gas-powered leaf blowers would be replaced with electric models only as they wear out. Therefore, this would be a natural, phased-in transition.

Gas-powered Leaf Blowers Produce a Stunning Amount of Harmful Air Pollution

Gas-powered leaf blowers produce unsafe levels of air pollution, containing a toxic mixture of carcinogens and particulate matter (PM2.5, PM10) linked to various chronic diseases (e.g., asthma, COPD), impaired immunity, cancers, male infertility, and prenatal developmental harm.¹

Gas leaf blower engines emit up to 23 times as much carbon monoxide as a Ford F-150 Raptor pickup truck.² Workers breathe in these fumes, released inches from their face, for hours.

Using a **gas-powered leaf blower for just one hour produces smog-forming air pollution equivalent to driving a Toyota Camry 1,100 miles.**³ Or, stated alternatively, using a gas leaf blower for just 12 1/2 hours produces as much air pollution as the average Marylander driving a car for a year (13,500 miles).



One Hour of Use

Driving 1,100 Miles

Collectively, gas-powered lawn and garden equipment in Maryland produces air pollution equivalent to 6.4 million cars,⁴ more than the approximately five million cars and light-duty vehicles actually registered in the state. This exacerbates Maryland's moderate to serious nonattainment of mandatory federal air quality standards, impacting 82% of residents.⁵

In addition to the direct cost to worker health, air pollution affects everyone. Asthma is a serious chronic respiratory disease with no known cure, frequently triggered by air pollution, that affects over 10% of Maryland adults and nearly 7% of children. In a 2022 Maryland government study, asthma in the state resulted in nearly 24 thousand visits annually to hospital emergency departments and hospitalizations costing roughly \$70 million, and thousands of hours of lost school and work days.⁶ These events, which result in lost productivity and higher healthcare costs, have a considerable economic drain on residents, companies, and our government.

Noise Pollution: A Serious Health Problem

Gas-powered leaf blowers are not merely a nuisance; they are a public health hazard. Typically generating 90 to 112 decibels, these devices operate well above the threshold for permanent hearing damage. While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warns that hearing loss can begin at 85 decibels, a gas leaf blower can exceed NIOSH (National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health) safety standards for the operator by 10 to 100-fold.^{7, 8}

The danger extends far beyond the operator. These devices blast low-frequency sound that exceeds World Health Organization noise standards for up to 800 feet—nearly three football fields away.⁹ Because this low-frequency sound penetrates walls and windows, it is perceived as four times louder indoors than electric alternatives. It does not just "make noise"; it invades our homes, schools, and workplaces, disrupting the ability to learn and sleep, while triggering chronic stress and adverse cardiovascular effects. For Maryland's children, outdoor workers, and others, this is an unavoidable environmental health risk.

Noise pollution affects nearly every species of wildlife studied. Studies of birds compiled over three million observations of 140 different species across North America showed noise pollution:

- Impedes finding a mate, delays nesting and can lead to nest abandonment
- Impacts birds' ability to listen for predators
- Results in smaller chicks with reduced feather growth, which indicates poorer health
- Causes changes in chromosomes (telomeres) associated with reduced lifespan!¹⁰

Electric Leaf Blowers are Blowing Away Gas

“Cordless leaf blowers are more convenient and quieter than gas, and the best ones are every bit as powerful” says David Trezza, [Consumer Reports](#) engineer in charge of leaf blower testing.¹¹

Electric leaf blowers are as powerful as gas models, frequently higher rated, produce no source emissions and much less noise, require no maintenance, and generally have significantly longer warranties, suggesting a longer product life. They also nearly eliminate the vibration fatigue that causes the debilitating Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome, permanent nerve and artery damage that can affect workers who frequently use vibrating equipment like gas leaf blowers.¹²

Electric leaf blowers are often comparably priced or less expensive than gas-powered models depending on the type. While professionals may need additional batteries, which increase upfront costs, the significant fuel and maintenance savings can generate a positive return on investment (ROI) within two years for most professional users even with additional batteries.¹³ Montgomery County estimated professionals could save approximately \$18/day in fuel alone.¹⁴

Battery operated leaf blowers use long-lasting, 95% recyclable lithium batteries (similar to those used in phones and laptops), that can be fully recharged for years. Plus, those batteries can often be used with other equipment (e.g., string trimmers). Some leaf blower batteries can now last 4-6 hours per charge. Major retailers are also supporting the transition from gas to electric lawn care. Home Depot has a stated goal of selling 85% electric lawn care equipment, excluding tractors, by 2028.¹⁵

Over 200 cities and counties have passed restrictions or full bans on gas-powered leaf blowers in 27 states and Washington, D.C.¹⁶ California has passed bans affecting all gas-powered lawn equipment to drive improvement of air quality for their residents. Colorado has mandated state agencies to transition all push mowers and handheld lawncare devices to electric.¹⁷

By passing HB167, Maryland will join over 200 jurisdictions in prioritizing public health and modern technology by phasing out gas-powered leaf blower usage on state-owned property. The bill is a modest step in directing the State on its own lands to phase in use of technology that is cleaner, less costly, and healthier for workers and the public. We urge a **favorable report** on HB167 to ensure Maryland leads by example in taking this common-sense step.

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¹ Global, regional, and national comparative risk assessment of 79 behavioural, environmental and occupational, and metabolic risks or clusters of risks in 188 countries, 1990–2013: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study, Forouzanfar, Mohammad H et al., *The Lancet*, Volume 386, Issue 10010 World Health Organization's [Global Burden of Disease Project](#).

² Kavanagh, Jason. December 5, 2011, Emissions Test: Car vs. Truck vs. Leaf Blower. <https://www.edmunds.com/car-reviews/features/emissions-test-car-vs-truck-vs-leaf-blower.html>

³ California Air Resources Board, CARB SORE Fact Sheet, <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/resources/fact-sheets/sore-small-engine-fact-sheet>

⁴ Dutzik, Sokolow, Metzger, Schatz, *Lawn Care Goes Electric: Why it's time to switch to a new generation of clean, quiet electric lawn equipment*, Oct. 2023

⁵ December 31, 2024 [8-Hour Ozone \(2015\) Designated Area/State Information | Green Book | US EPA](#)

⁶ Asthma, Maryland Department of Health <https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/OEHFP/EH/pages/asthma.aspx>

⁷ CDC, https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/hearing_loss/what_noises_cause_hearing_loss.html

⁸ Walker E, Banks JL. Characteristics of lawn and garden equipment sound: A community pilot study. *J Environ Toxicol Stud* 2017

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Dorrado-Correa et al., ["Timing Matters: Traffic Noise Accelerates Telomere Loss Rate Differently Across Developmental Stages."](#) *Frontiers in Zoology*, 15:20 (2018)

¹¹ Hope, Paul. Best Cordless Leaf Blowers of 2025: The best handheld and backpack electric leaf blowers from CR's tests include models from Ego and Ryobi, *Consumer Reports* January 1, 2025

¹² Campbell, RA, et al, Hand-arm vibration syndrome: A rarely seen diagnosis. *J Vasc Surg Cases Innov Tech*. 2017 Apr 25;3(2):60-62. doi: 10.1016/j.jvscit.2017.01.002.

¹³ The Economics of Switching to Battery-Powered Leaf Blowers: A Cost Comparison, Santa Cruz, CA, Jan, 2023
[Economics of Switching to Battery Leaf Blowers](#)

¹⁴ Montgomery County, MD Government
https://www2.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgportalapps/Press_Detail.aspx?Item_ID=44121

¹⁵ The Home Depot Sets Goal for Battery Powered Products to Drive over 85% of Outdoor Lawn Equipment Sales by 2028 June 22, 2023. <https://corporate.homedepot.com/news/sustainability/home-depot-sets-goal-battery-powered-products-drive-over-85-outdoor-lawn>

¹⁶ U.S. Public Interest Research Group, <https://pirg.org/edfund/resources/interactive-map-of-lawn-mower-and-leaf-blower-policies/>

¹⁷ Colorado Executive Order 2023
<https://osa.colorado.gov/sites/osa/files/documents/D%202023%20018%20Greening%20Govt%20EO.pdf>