



HB091

Fossil-Fuel Powered Lawn and Garden Care Equipment - - State Purchase and Use – Prohibition

Testimony before the House Health and Government Operations Committee

Hearing January 23, 2024, 1:00 pm

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Delegate Foley and members of the committee, my name is Elizabeth Fixsen, and I represent the 700+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony in support of HB091, prohibiting the government of Maryland from purchasing or using fossil-fuel powered lawn and garden care equipment. We thank those delegates who have sponsored this bill.

This bill enables the state to lead by example by helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Climate Solutions Now Act, one of the most consequential laws in the country to fight the effects of climate change. The bill aligns with Maryland's new Climate Reduction Plan to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2031.

Besides emitting CO2 emissions that contribute to climate change, fossil-fuel powered lawn and garden care equipment harms the environment in other ways:

- They emit high levels of formaldehyde, benzene, fine particulate matter and smog-forming chemicals--hundreds of times more than automobiles.
- Spills from refueling contaminate soil and leach into waterways.
- Maintenance of such equipment produces toxic waste including fuel filters and contaminated air filters.
- Blowers erode, compact, and dry out soil and harm plants, microorganisms, and pollinators.
- Operating gas-powered lawn mowers and leaf blowers creates high intensity, low frequency noise that impacts nearby homes, schools, and parks and disturbs wildlife. For example, operating a gas-powered leaf blower can cause permanent hearing loss in two hours and can impact 90 nearby homes.
- When used to clear demolition debris, blowers can pollute the air with lead and asbestos, which are known to cause dizziness, headaches, asthma attacks, heart and lung disease, cancer, and dementia. Clouds of debris created by blowers can contain other pollutants, such as pollen, fertilizer, dried animal feces, herbicides, and pesticides.

Commercial battery-powered equipment on the market today offers competitive power and efficiency. As time passes, more and more landscape professionals are adopting environmentally friendly methods for grounds maintenance. The State of Maryland should be doing the same.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.

Elizabeth Fixsen