



January 19, 2024

**HB91 Fossil Fuel-Powered Lawn and Garden Equipment - State Purchase, Use and Contracts - Prohibition
FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice-Chair Cullison and Honorable Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

The Green Towson Alliance writes in support of HB91, which prohibits the State from purchasing fossil fuel-powered lawn equipment beginning January 1, 2025, and prohibits the state from entering into contracts with lawn service providers who use fossil fuel-powered lawn equipment after January 1, 2025. The phasing out of fossil fuel-powered lawn equipment will send a clear message that our state is advocating for the health of Marylanders and our environment and setting an example for businesses and citizens to follow. This bill is an important component in achieving the goals of Maryland's Climate Reduction Plan and helps put Maryland on the path to achieve the greenhouse gas emission targets laid out in the Climate Solutions Now Act.

Gasoline-powered lawn mowers account for 5% of total air pollution in the U.S. according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and that number is even higher in urban areas. Further, a half hour of use of a gasoline-powered two-stroke leaf blower creates the same emissions as driving a Ford F-150 3,900 miles per car company Edmunds. Fossil fuel-powered lawn equipment emits many pollutants including fine particulates (PM2.5), ozone-forming nitrogen oxides, VOCs, and air toxins such as benzene and formaldehyde. Exposure to these pollutants can increase the risk of significant health effects including asthma, reproductive issues, mental health issues, and cancer.

The Centers for Disease Control warns that the two-stroke gasoline engines used on commercial leaf blowers generate noise at 80 to 85 decibels, with some as high as 105 decibels – equivalent to a plane taking off. For users, “hearing loss is possible in less than 5 minutes,” the CDC reports. Bystanders are also at risk because the low-frequency noise penetrates walls and travels long distances. Neighbors as far as 2,500 feet away can be exposed to sounds louder than the 55 decibels considered safe by the World Health Organization.

Cities and counties around the U.S. have begun to restrict the use of fossil fuel-powered lawn equipment. With Maryland working hard to achieve a 60% reduction in climate emissions by 2031 and reach net zero emissions by 2045, the state needs to move toward readily-available and energy-efficient battery powered alternatives to fossil fuel-powered lawn equipment. Additionally, the state must stop exposing its landscape workers to the many health hazards caused by fossil fuel-powered lawn equipment, especially when cost effective alternatives are available.

We ask for a favorable report on HB91 as an important step toward the goal of a greener, healthier Maryland for all.

Respectfully,

Kirsten Hoffman for the Green Towson Alliance

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The Green Towson Alliance unites Towson area environmentalists to create a greener, healthier and more beautiful community through collaboration and activism.