

February 3, 2026

RI House Municipal Government and Housing Committee

Dear Chair Casey and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strongest opposition to H 7150, the bill that would make it illegal for RI towns and municipalities to restrict lawn care equipment in any way based on fuel type. This is a deeply retrograde piece of legislation that is in direct opposition to the State Government of Rhode Island's official commitment to green energy goals, including, to quote from energy.ri.gov, "reducing economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions" and "generating new investment and job growth opportunities across the green economy." H 7150 seeks to undermine the green economy and Rhode Island's stated climate goals by exempting gas powered lawn care equipment—all of which relies on notoriously polluting two-stroke engines—from any regulation whatsoever. And let's call a spade a spade. This outrageous bill is clearly a reaction by landscaping companies against the recent Providence city legislation that mandates a gradual phase out of the use of gas powered leafblowers, machines that are causing a major public health crisis.

There is literally nothing good about gas-powered leafblowers. Yes, they remove leaves and debris from sidewalks and lawns, but often by blowing it all into the street or onto other people's properties—and always at excessively high cost to the health and well-being of the workers in landscaping crews, as well as of residents, animals, and the environment in the neighborhoods where they are being used. The data consistently underline how gas-powered leafblowers are causing public health problems. The noise from gas-powered leafblowers consistently exceeds that deemed safe by WHO, CDC, OSHA and NIOSH for workers and the public.¹ It also consistently violates the municipal noise ordinances. The noisiest ones can impact up to 91 homes at once with noise greater than 55 decibels. It's especially awful when multiple leaf blowers are being used on one property or one block. This noise pollution has consequences for the health of everyone exposed to it, especially the low-income workers who use gas-powered leafblowers all day long. Exposure to excessive noise is linked to all kinds of health problems including not just hearing loss, but also coronary artery disease, impaired immune systems, high blood pressure, and impaired child development.

Since most leaf blowers are two-stroke engines, they have no emissions control and they burn fuel very inefficiently, as you can tell from yards away by the stink they emit. These machines emit volatile organic compounds (VOCs) which the EPA considers Hazardous Air Pollutants that can cause cancer and that help form smog. Numerous studies have proven leaf blowers to be extremely inefficient and costly users of fuel. In one hour, one gas leaf blower creates the same amount of hydrocarbon pollution as driving a F-150 pickup from Connecticut to Texas. The air pollution caused by gas-powered leaf blowers is compounded by the fine particulate matter they send into the air and that is easily assimilated in the lungs of people and pets (as well as wildlife). The clouds of fine particulate matter created by gas-powered

¹ Fink D. 2017. What Is a Safe Noise Level for the Public? *American Journal of Public Health* January 2017: Vol. 107, No. 1, pp. 44-45. <http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.2016.303527>

leafblowers contain animal feces, fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, pollen, diesel soot, brake dust, rubber tire particles, and heavy metals. One hour of gas-powered leafblower use can put up to 5 pounds of this toxic mix into the air, an invisible cloud that can be suspended there for 5-7 days and is breathed in by humans and animals. Often when I am walking by landscape crews using gas leafblowers, I put on a mask to try to protect myself, but probably almost everywhere I walk in my neighborhood, I pass through clouds of toxic material left on a previous day by leafblowers.

This is the state of affairs that H 7150 seeks to protect by law. Sure, the bill invokes as cover the language of affordability. But many other cities and towns across the US have passed legislation to ensure an equitable transition from gas powered leafblowers to electric ones. There is no reason Rhode Island municipalities can't do the same. And then the landscaping industry would become a participant in the development of Rhode Island's green economy rather than being granted a shocking legal right to be an obstacle to it.

Even more important, shouldn't we ask: affordable for whom? The law should seek to protect the common good, not the economic interests of a tiny minority (in this case, landscaping companies). How can we place a price on public health? Can the state really afford to make it illegal for Rhode Islanders to seek remedies for certain types of air and noise pollution that are making people ill and preventing them from working at home and even just existing without constant daily assaults of noise and toxic emissions? Isn't it the state's duty and responsibility to care for us *all*?

Due to health reasons, I unfortunately cannot attend the hearing this afternoon, but if I were there, I would read you some words borrowed from an organization in New York that is fighting to ban gas powered leafblowers in a municipality there. Legislators who support bills like H 7150 in effect saying:

“ We are fighting for excessive, community-wide noise — and routine violations of local noise ordinances. We are fighting for daily exposure to toxic exhaust — including known carcinogens. We are fighting for increased long-term cancer risk, especially for workers. We are fighting for permanent hearing damage — by defending equipment that exceeds safe noise levels. We are fighting for higher cardiovascular stress — by polluting the air where people live and work. We are fighting for sacrificing worker health — insisting on loud, polluting equipment despite safer alternatives. We are fighting for exposing children and seniors to avoidable harm. We are fighting for operating this equipment at hospitals, medical offices, libraries, and schools. We are fighting for degraded neighborhood peace and quality of life. We are fighting for continued dependence on cheap, dirty gas engines. We are fighting for lower operating costs — paid for by workers, residents, and communities. We are fighting to avoid cleaner, quieter alternatives that already exist.”

This is the harm that H 7150 seeks to defend and enshrine into law. I urge you in the strongest possible terms to oppose this bill.

Respectfully yours,

Amy Remensnyder (18 Everett Avenue, Providence RI 02906)