TO: The Rhode Island House Finance Committee
RE: H7495
SUBJECT: support for this bill
FROM: Amy Remensnyder (Providence)

I write to express my strongest support for H7495/S3377. This bill will take a long-needed step toward making Rhode Island's lawncare industry greener and toward helping to end the public health crisis that gas-powered leafblowers, with their bone-shaking roar and polluting emissions, have created.

Electric leafblowers can do the same job as gas-powered ones with a minimum of noise and air pollution. Brown University recently transitioned all of its landscaping tools to electric models, including leafblowers, with no resultant decline in the quality of the campus's appearance. Electric leafblowers comparable in power to the commercial gas-powered ones are now comparable in price. Rhode Island should do all it can to ensure that the lawncare industry makes an equitable transition to battery powered equipment. H7495/S3377 is a big step in the right direction.

To speak on a personal level, between about March and the time of the first snow, I hear the terrible noise of gas-powered leafblowers all day long at my house. Sometimes it is deafening, if the landscapers are within 3 blocks, and at other times is just excessively loud. But always it is extremely disruptive and makes it impossible for me to relax in my own home and to enjoy my outdoor space. I can hear it even through high-quality noise canceling headphones. Usually there are only a few hours a day when I am not assaulted by leafblower noise. If I am outside, I smell the stink of the gas-powered leafblowers' emissions as they drifts onto my property from blocks away. And all this to do a task that could just as easily accomplished with a rake and broom – or an electric leafblower. I know that I will not be able to retire in Rhode Island unless the situation changes, because I could not bear the stress of being home all day and listening to gas-powered leafblowers and breathing in their air pollution.

The data consistently underline how gas-powered leafblowers are causing a public helath problems. The noise from gas-powered leafblowers consistently exceeds that deemed safe by WHO, CDC, OSHA and NIOSH for workers and the public.[i] 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 s easily assimilated in the lungs of people and pets (as well as wildlife). The clouds of fine particulate matter created by gas-powered leafblowers contain animal feces, fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, pollen, diesel soot, brake dust, rubber tire particles, and heavy metals. One hour of gas-powered leafblowers 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.

It's time Rhode Island addressed this major public health issue and helped our lawncare industry transition toward greener equipment. Please pass H7495!

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[i] 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