

ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL of RHODE ISLAND

Testimony in support of H-7495:

2025 BATTERY-POWERED LEAF BLOWER PILOT REBATE AND EDUCATION PROGRAM

Peter Trafton, on behalf of ECRI

House Finance Committee, May 2, 2024

Dear Chair Abney and Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to convey the strong support of the Environment Council of Rhode Island for House Bill 7495 by Rep. Boylan, Sen. Zurier and colleagues.

Leaf blowers, typically powered by two cycle motors, are a familiar sound all over Rhode Island from Spring to Fall. Certainly irritating, yet a valued tool by lawncare workers and landscapers, they pose serious threats to their users, our communities, and the environment.

Loud, low-frequency noise spreads annoyingly through our neighborhoods and into our homes. The noise and vibrations damage the hearing and neuromuscular functions of those who wield them. The noise is inadequately blocked by typical ear protection. Dangerous toxic chemicals are sprayed from the gas + oil fuel: benzene, butadiene, formaldehyde, and fine particulate residues. These are particularly threatening to nearby young and old, and even more so to the individuals using the blowers. Two-cycle leaf blowers, lacking modern emissions controls, emit hundreds of times as much greenhouse gases – the carbon pollution that causes global warming. The blowers interfere significantly with our efforts to meet the goals of Rhode Island's Act on Climate.

For the health and environmental reasons above, blowers with electric motors are beginning to replace the two-cycle machines. Bill 7495 is thoughtfully designed to reduce air and noise pollution and help commercial lawncare workers adopt safer zero-emissions technology. It offers a **pilot rebate program** to significantly reduce the cost of the electric machines. This will help Rhode Islanders succeed as the landscaping industry moves towards safer and effective electric blowers. As the demand for electric blowers increases, their prices will fall.

The second part of 7495 is an **education and training program**, directed by OER and DEM, and guided by the experience of commercial landscapers. Hands-on experience, familiarity with various aspects of the new technology, and the keys to an economically successful transition as well as safety and a healthier workplace are all included.

ECRI urges you to support this bill and help Rhode Islanders achieve safer, more healthy, and less polluting lawncare. Help the lawncare industry adopt today's practices. End of the noise!

Thank you for considering our input,



Peter Trafton MD

Co-VP of policy, Environment Council of Rhode Island