

Chris O'Brien

From: Kenda Swartz <kendaswartz@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, April 27, 2024 7:50 PM
To: House Finance Committee; Rep. Speakman, June
Subject: RI H7495 / S2277 2025 Battery-powered Leaf Blower Pilot Rebate And Education Program

Dear Chairman Abney and Representative Speakman,

I am writing to express my concerns about the widespread use of leaf blowers and the negative impact they are having on my health and well-being, as well as the well-being of others in our community.

As a resident of Bristol, I have experienced firsthand the significant problems associated with leaf blower usage. The noise pollution caused by these machines is intolerable, disrupting the peace and quiet of our neighborhoods and making it difficult to focus on daily tasks or enjoy outdoor activities. The incessant roar is particularly disturbing making it difficult for me to focus, as I work from home. Putting my own needs aside, the unsettling noise from leaf blowers can disturb children's sleep patterns, affect their ability to concentrate on schoolwork, and potentially lead to stress and anxiety in addition to potential hearing issues.

The emissions from these machines contain harmful pollutants such as carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, and particulate matter, which can exacerbate respiratory conditions and contribute to cardiovascular problems. Those who suffer from asthma and respiratory problems, particularly children, are especially vulnerable to the effects of poor air quality.

On any given late spring, summer, or fall morning while walking, jogging, or biking on the east bay bike path, I spend at about half of my outdoor time breathing in the toxic fumes at a time I should be enjoying and breathing in fresh air. The noise is frustrating. I want to hear the birds, the breeze, and the water, but instead I'm relegated to hearing the annoying din of those machines. There is no relief from this noise except in the winter when the cold is then a deterrent from spending long hours outside.

The consequences of leaf blowing are also devastating to wildlife. The shrieking and booming generated by leaf blowers also disrupts wildlife habitats, causing stress, disorientation, and even physical harm to animals in affected areas. The obliteration of critical understory where birds, frogs, fireflies, bees, caterpillars and small mammals forage, nest and overwinter gets destroyed. Vital insects get displaced and harmed. The force of the air and debris propelled by leaf blowers can directly injure beneficial insects, particularly those with delicate bodies or wings, leading to physical harm or death.

In addition to the health concerns, leaf blowers also contribute to environmental degradation and the depletion of natural resources. The reliance on fossil fuels to power these machines contributes to climate change, while the indiscriminate blowing of debris disperses dust, allergens, and other pollutants into the air and onto nearby surfaces, harming ecosystems and wildlife.

I urge you to take action to address these issues and support measures to regulate or restrict the use of leaf blowers in our community. This could include implementing noise ordinances to limit the hours of operation for leaf blowers, incentivizing the use of quieter electric models, educating the community, or promoting alternative methods of leaf removal such as raking or sweeping. I lived in Italy for a few years, and there, landscapers and public workers use rakes. I've read studies where raking is more efficient, which isn't difficult to see. I've seen guys standing in the same area with their blowers, dust blowing all over, and debris barely moving from one place to the next. I also don't understand the obsession with leaf removal and sterile properties. Leaving the leaves creates organic matter for soil health, promoting biodiversity and supporting ecosystem functions.

By taking proactive steps to mitigate the negative impacts of leaf blower usage, we can improve the quality of life for all residents and protect the health of our environment.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I hope we can come to a solution that supports the local landscaping businesses while protecting the health of our community members and the wildlife whose survival depends on us. I support H H7495, and I hope you do, too.

Sincerely,

Kenda Swartz
Bristol