

RINLA

RHODE ISLAND

NURSERY & LANDSCAPE ASSOCIATION

May 1 2024

RE H7495

Rep. Marvin Abney, Chair

Rep. Scott Slater, First Vice Chair Rep. Alex Marszalkowski, Second Vice Chair Rep. Karen Alzate Rep. Jacquelyn Baginski Rep. Nathan Biah Rep. Terri Cortvriend Rep. Grace Diaz Rep. John Edwards Rep. Raymond Hull Rep. George Nardone Rep. William O'Brien Rep. Brian Rea Rep. Teresa Tanzi Rep. Camille Vella-Wilkinson, Members

Chair Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee


I submit this brief note offering appreciation of the efforts of the authors and sponsors of 2024-H7495. As a retired URI Professor of Plant Sciences and current Executive Director of the Rhode Island Nursery and Landscape Association, these comments come from my Board of Directors and my own views.

While not perfect it offers a significant advance in process and potential behaviors concerning the development, evaluation and adoption of electric powered land care equipment. The first item we would note and acknowledge the offer to assist landscape businesses with a power transition as has been done in the automobile industry is greatly appreciated. The absence of a 'mandate' is noted and reduces some of the stress and challenge presented by previous efforts to induce change in the industry.

A 'rebate' program is appreciated but we feel it should not stand alone. The purchase and 'trade-in' should occur simultaneously through a Rhode Island based sales point. Some of these sales points are retail outlets and others a more commonly considered 'wholesale or commercial' outlets. The opportunities should not be limited a the 'retail' language in the bill. A simultaneous electric powered equipment pickup and trade-in of fuel powered equipment would facilitate tracking the goals of the legislation along with a better dataset for future policy decisions.

The legislation focuses on the 'rebate' aspect of the equipment. I would respectfully suggest that section 42-6.3-4 be revised to link the receipt of a 'rebate' to mandatory participation in a data collection effort. This component of the landscape industry is dynamic and the developments are coming in rapid timeframes. Assisting someone with the purchase and requiring them to provide information of who they are, what their customers want, what equipment needs are currently and how the new equipment performs in comparison to these is necessary. I'd respectfully suggest mandating data collection through a government entity versus an established professional organization would receive different participation and response values.

I would respectfully request that page 4 line 18 and 19 be removed. The industry responds to customers wishes. Our RI Nursery and Landscape Association members endeavor to educate their customers on



best management practices but recognize the customer is always right and we endeavor to provide goods and services the customer wants at affordable prices.

If have some greater details on a marked up version of the legislation which might assist with a Sub A and certainly would make myself available to assist.

Respectfully

W. Michael Sullivan, PhD

Executive Director

2024 – H 7495

LC004676

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- 2025 BATTERY-POWERED
LEAF BLOWER PILOT REBATE AND EDUCATION PROGRAM

Introduced By: Representatives Boylan, Kislak, Ajello, Bennett, Spears, Carson,
McGaw, Tanzi, Cruz, and Knight

Date Introduced: February 02, 2024

Referred To: House Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 42 of the General Laws entitled "STATE AFFAIRS AND
2 GOVERNMENT" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 6.3

4 2025 BATTERY-POWERED LEAF BLOWER PILOT REBATE AND EDUCATION
5 PROGRAM

6 **42-6.3-1. Short title.**

7 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "2025 Battery-Powered Leaf Blower
8 Pilot Rebate and Education Program."

9 **42-6.3-2. Definitions.**

10 As used in this chapter:

11 (1) "Battery-powered leaf blower" or "e-blower" means a battery-powered electric device
12 that propels air out of a nozzle to move debris such as leaves and grass cuttings. The term includes
13 a hand-held or back-pack configuration of a leaf blower.

14 (2) "DEM" means the department of environmental management.

15 (3) "OER" means the office of energy resources.

16 (4) "Pilot rebate program" and "rebate program" means the pilot rebate program operated
17 by OER and provided for in this chapter, as more fully described in § 42-6.3-4.

18 **42-6.3-3. Purpose.**

use dealers to recover fuel units at time of delivery of e-unit

1 complete proof of disposal form with the stamp or signature from the discard site. Leaf blowers
2 which are turned in for disposal shall be rendered unusable and shall not be resold; provided that,
3 these leaf blowers may be recycled for scrap metal.

4 (i) If an electric handheld model is purchased, either a handheld or backpack model shall
5 be turned in.

6 (ii) If an electric backpack model is purchased, a backpack blower shall be turned in.

7 (5) Within sixty (60) days of receiving a voucher, the applicant shall return the voucher,
8 copy of sales receipt of the e-blower, and proof of disposal to receive reimbursement. The receipt
9 shall include the purchase date of the new e-blower, the purchase price, and proof that Rhode Island
10 sales tax was applied during the transaction. Applicants shall also:

11 (i) Provide the e-blower serial number, make and model; and

12 (ii) Applicants shall pledge to maintain ownership and operation of the e-blower for at least
13 one year after purchase.

14 (6) Applicants that receive a rebate shall be required to complete a bi-annual blower usage
15 survey to be used by the State of Rhode Island for future rebate program considerations. via educational pgm

16 (d) The rebate amount shall be limited to two (2) e-blower rebates of up to one thousand
17 five hundred dollars (\$1,500) each, per registered entity, based upon the purchase price of the new
18 e-blower(s) or batteries. The amount of rebates a registered entity may receive shall not exceed
19 three thousand dollars (\$3,000) in total.

20 (e) To qualify for the rebate program, the purchase date shall be within the rebate program
21 dates, which shall commence January 1, 2025, and end January 1, 2026. Rebates shall not be
22 provided to purchases made before or after these dates.

23 (f) Rebate recipients shall independently select and purchase their own e-blower and
24 related batteries and assume all liability for such products.

25 (g) Applications shall be accepted on a first come, first serve basis. Rebate processing times
26 may vary. The rebate shall not include Rhode Island taxes, or shipping fees.

27 (h) The OER shall have the right to amend or terminate this rebate program at any time
28 when funding for the program expires. The OER may also request continuance of the program if
29 the OER determines that the program merits continued funding and operation.

30 **42-6.3-5. Education and training.**

31 (a) The OER and DEM shall partner to develop and provide educational opportunities for
32 businesses and employees
32 professional landscapers to learn best practices and safety for battery-powered landscaping
33 equipment. As the landscaping industry shifts to electric operations, this training will help
34 Rhode Islanders prepare for continued success in a changing industry. Fifty thousand dollars

1 (\$50,000) of the appropriation authorized pursuant to this chapter shall be designated to fund this
2 education and training in association with a credible professional landscape association
3 (b) Components of the education program shall include:
4 (1) In-person demonstrations of battery-powered landscaping ~~equipment~~ **use and evaluate** where
5 participants can ~~try out~~ **evaluate** equipment. These events shall offer information in multiple languages,
6 including, but not limited to, Spanish and English, in order to reach as broad an audience as
7 possible, and shall be held in different counties to ensure accessibility throughout the state.
8 (2) ~~Online or in-person~~ classes shall cover topics such as:
9 ~~(i) Health and environmental costs of two (2) stroke engines and other gas-powered~~
10 ~~equipment.~~
11 (ii) State of the art and future prospects of electric landscaping technology;
12 (iii) Batteries for landscaping ~~equipment~~;
13 (iv) Safe handling and storage, charging, life cycle, disposal, and recycling of electric and
14 battery-operated landscaping tools and batteries;
15 (v) Financing and return on investment for electric equipment;
16 (vi) How to equip a landscaping business with battery-powered equipment;
17 (vii) Successful strategies for managing a battery-powered landscaping business; and
18 ~~(viii) Low-impact landscaping practices, such as mulching leaves around trees and shrubs~~
19 ~~and mulching into lawns.~~
20 (c) The OER, in consultation with the department of environmental management, shall
21 provide outreach in promoting the program through relevant media and professional organizations,
22 and printed and online media. The OER shall strive to broadly disseminate information about the
23 program in order to reach all communities in Rhode Island, and shall prepare materials in multiple
24 languages, including, but not limited to, English and Spanish. This outreach shall include basic
25 information about gas and electric leaf blowers as described in subsection (b) of this section, as
26 **and evaluation** well as the rebate program. The OER and the department of environmental management shall post
27 this information, on their respective websites.

28 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

LC004676

EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- 2025 BATTERY-POWERED
LEAF BLOWER PILOT REBATE AND EDUCATION PROGRAM

1 This act would establish a pilot program for battery powered leaf blower pilot rebate and
2 education program in an effort to reduce air and noise pollution by helping commercial landscapers
3 adopt zero-emissions technology, as well as benefit the health of landscape workers and
4 surrounding communities. This objective would be accomplished through a pilot rebate program
5 for the purchase of battery-powered leaf blowers and an education program to help landscaping
6 professionals prepare to succeed with zero-emissions equipment with an initial appropriation from
7 the general assembly in the amount of three hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$350,000).

8 This act would take effect upon passage.

=====
LC004676
=====