

To the County Council :

I am writing in support of the legislation sponsored by Council Member Gabe Alborno and co-sponsored by Council Members Marilyn Balcombe and Dawn Luedtke to provide a short-term exemption for professional landscaping companies to continue to use gas powered leaf blowers. The use ban exemption proposed by Council Member Alborno would exclusively apply to qualifying professional landscaping companies for use of gas-powered leaf blowers between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, limiting use to weekdays between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. The legislation would have a sunset date in 2028.

The landscaping industry is mostly composed of small, often family-owned businesses, employing a large number of workers, many of whom are immigrants who work long hours in physically demanding jobs. The industry already faces a number of challenges because people's disposable incomes have gone down, contract renewals are harder and harder to secure, and the fall season is the busiest for these landscaping companies.

The county did adopt a rebate program when it approved the legislation to ban gas powered blowers, but it provided very limited support for an expensive transition process. Landscapers with revenue less than \$250,000 annually or five or fewer employees could receive up to \$1,500 in a year. Landscapers with revenue of more than \$250,000 or six or more employees can receive up to \$1,000 in a year. Tariffs are making an already expensive technology even costlier, however, and a large number of batteries must be charged and ready because they only power devices for short periods of time. The original 2023 legislation was considered a noise ordinance and an environmental protection measure but the practical effect is likely to be to force landscapers to carry generators into the field to power blowers, undermining the primary objectives of the legislative.

The bill only provides an exemption to the ban to allow landscape professionals to use

gas-powered leaf blower equipment during certain months of the year. The goal of the exemption is to allow qualifying professional landscapers more time to use gas-powered leaf blowers due to the limitations and expense of battery-powered blowers. It recognizes the original legislation was unrealistic and could harm important small businesses who already face many struggles to keep afloat. The legislation is a “common sense” way to give landscaping companies more time to transition their equipment and comply with the law without hurting their businesses and many employees.

I will add a suggestion: as opponents of this bill are rightfully concerned about landscape worker health, respiratory and otherwise, perhaps a financial incentive for landscape companies to provide employees with appropriate respiratory masks and equipment (gloves) as recommended by Health Department to mitigate the health concerns cited. While that does not resolve fully all the health issues associated with gas use, it does provide a level of protection for employees most directly affected .

And, if any manufacturers or distributors of optimal PPE is within our County, utilizing that company as a source would be an additional benefit to MoCo.

Thank You for your consideration,

Ann Connor, R.N.

----- Soper St.

Poolesville, Md.20837