

**Montgomery County Council**

**Legislation: Bill 19-25 Noise Control – Leaf Removal Equipment – Seasonal Exemption**

**Organization: Climate Coalition Montgomery County**

**Position: Oppose**

**Council Hearing: July 15, 2025**

Dear Council President Stewart and Council Members,

As a representative of the Climate Coalition Montgomery County, my testimony is in opposition to Bill 19-25, which delays the complete ban of gas-powered leaf blowers, approved by this council in September, 2023 by an overwhelming vote of 10-1.

When this council was deliberating Bill 18-22, the gas-powered leaf blower ban, a primary concern was the development of an effective rebate program by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The program that was subsequently approved by this council helps residential users and commercial landscape companies. It was specifically designed to support the start of the ban on July 1, 2025.

As you know, residential users can get a single \$100 rebate over the 2.5 years of the program. Revenue qualified companies, which are the small landscapers, can get a \$1500 rebate every year, meaning they can get it up to 3 times. Larger companies can get a \$1000 rebate also up to 3 times.

The rebate program extends through December, 2026, a year and half after the ban goes into effect. This supports DEP's goal to not punitively cite users, but provide time to allow companies to take advantage of the rebate and get into compliance.

Councilmembers emphasized that the county's information efforts must reach the smaller companies. Based on this criterion, the program's success is clear. There were about 500 rebates given out, including 205 for commercial users. Of those 205, 187, that is, 91%, were to revenue qualifying businesses.

Thus, my first point is that small businesses in Montgomery County have been well informed and do not need the seasonal exemption.

Related to this point, Ruppert Landscape was mentioned in the bill's background as one company that could take advantage of the delay. They are "one of the largest landscaping companies in the region...which employs nearly 2,000 employees." Well, of course they are large. They are a national company serving the east coast from Pennsylvania to Florida and Texas. This includes Washington, DC, which has had a ban on gas-powered leaf blowers since 2022. If they can comply with the law in DC, then they should comply in Montgomery County.

A second issue also compels rejection of this bill. When discussing the original Bill 18-22, Councilmember Fani-Gonzalez said, quote, "This is not just about noise, this is about health". She was referring to the fact that gas leaf blowers expose workers to substantial exhaust emissions. This includes hydrocarbons from both burned and unburned fuel to generate ozone, carbon monoxide, benzene, acetaldehyde, and formaldehyde (1). These all have harmful health effects, with the latter three considered probable human carcinogens.

Third, there is the issue of fairness. Many landscaping companies made a business decision to plan ahead and take advantage of the county's efforts to help them in the transition and comply with the law. With the ban now in effect, after DEP has spent over \$600,000 to inform users and provide rebates, and after more than 200 rebates have been given to mostly smaller landscaping companies, this exemption shows little respect to those forward-thinking businesses who seek to be good citizens and engaged members of the Montgomery County community.

I urge you to vote against Bill 19-25 and its delay of the complete ban of gas-powered leaf blowers which went into effect two weeks ago.

Thank you for your time.

Kevin Walton  
For the Climate Coalition Montgomery County  
kmwalton@gmail.com

## References

1. A report to the California legislature on the potential health and environmental impacts of leaf blowers. (2000) California Air Resources Board.  
<https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2018-11/Health%20and%20Environmental%20Impacts%20of%20Leaf%20Blowers.pdf>