

Dear County Council,

I urge you to maintain the ban on gas-powered leaf blowers for Montgomery County, which went into effect on July 1. This legislation was approved in a 10 to 1 vote by the council in 2023. At the time, the council heralded this decision as “one example of the many steps we are taking to help combat climate change, while also working with our small businesses to offset the initial fiscal impacts of going green”.

Those offsets are important to note - landscapers have had ample time to work costs of battery-operated leaf blowers into their budgets, and the county's rebate program has generously aided landscapers who need to purchase new equipment with three \$1000-\$1500 rebates available over the 22 month period.

The county itself urges homeowners to mulch their leaves. As recently as this past fall, the county's “[green Montgomery](#)” website listed five ways to use leaves on properties, encouraging the use of nutrient-rich clippings. Individuals that do not wish to follow current environmental practices should be prepared to pay higher prices for their decisions and landscapers can charge accordingly, explaining that leaf blowing and removal of lawn clippings is an additional fee. The county is working against itself if it retracts laws meant to encourage greener practices.

Professional landscapers are the primary users of leaf blowers, so exempting them is tantamount to throwing out legislation that has been approved by the majority of residents. Ironically, those workers are the most harmed by the pollutants of the gas-powered blowers, so a county that cares about its workers should be pushing for safer conditions for some of the lowest paid employees.

In fact, when the council approved this legislation in 2023, council member Fani-Gonzalez said “As the only immigrant on the Montgomery County Council, I am particularly proud to represent the many immigrants who do these incredibly tough and dangerous jobs. Today's vote shows that we are taking action to improve the health of landscape workers, as electric leaf blowers eliminate emissions that heighten respiratory conditions like asthma. These battery-powered blowers are effective and contribute to a healthier environment and improved air quality for all.”

The healthcare costs of NOT enacting this legislation will outweigh the costs of new leaf blowers. In fact, the [World Economic Forum](#) estimates the cost of air pollution averages \$2500 per American in annual healthcare costs. Those costs are not evenly borne though, and landscapers exposed to fumes are at greater risk.

When this legislation was approved, one council member said “I'm glad that we took the time to discuss it thoroughly, so that we passed the best bill possible.” That sentiment is still true. Banning gas-powered leaf blowers improves air quality, reduces noise-pollution, and improves soil health. The decision was made in 2023 to put human and environmental health first. There is no reason to question that now.

I urge you to keep the ban.

Sincerely,  
Elaine Akst