



Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce, Inc.



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July 21, 2025

County Council President Kate Stewart
Members of the County Council
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Council President Stewart and Members of the County Council:

The Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce represents over 450 businesses serving the Upcounty in Gaithersburg, Germantown, Clarksburg, Damascus, and the surrounding areas. Our chamber counts five companies in our membership that provide only landscaping services to their clients. Two of these are very small companies. Two are large companies that also operate in neighboring states. Two are minority-owned. Three are family-owned businesses. Together, they report over 225 full-time employees in our Chamber's service footprint, plus seasonal and part-time employees.

GGCC supports and appreciates the legislation, Expedited Bill 19-25, sponsored by Councilmember Gabe Alborno and co-sponsored by Councilmembers Balcombe, Luedtke, and Katz to provide a short-term exemption for professional landscaping companies to continue to use gas powered leaf blowers. The use ban exemption proposed by Councilmember Alborno would exclusively apply to qualifying professional landscaping companies for use of gas-powered leaf blowers between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, the very busy season for leaf removal.

The original 2022 legislation that enacted the ban on gas-powered leaf blowers, while well-intended, causes unnecessary harm to the businesses providing landscaping services to our communities. For example, while the county did adopt a rebate program when it approved the legislation to ban gas powered blowers, it provided very limited support for an expensive transition process. Rebates have been offered at \$1000-\$1500 annually for up to three years. One of my members reports having to invest over \$30,000 to replace equipment that was not at the end of its useful life with commercial-grade, battery-operated equipment that does not function near as well as its gas-powered counterpart. Not only is discarding the still-useful gas-powered equipment wasteful, the employees need to work longer to provide the same level of quality service with the new electric equipment. You heard throughout the council hearing testimony that batteries alone are \$900-\$1600 each. Also, tariffs are making this already expensive equipment even costlier.

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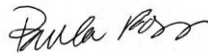
Another member reports a need for a full-scale upgrade of office infrastructure and facilities to upgrade electrical panels and circuits, to be able to comply with the new law and charge a large number of batteries. This is a costly upgrade.

Batteries on the electric leaf blower equipment do not last long enough to do a day's work for our professional landscaping companies. The batteries are costly, so investing in multiples becomes untenable. In order to charge a large number of batteries throughout the day, landscapers will be forced to carry generators into the field to charge batteries continuously, undermining the primary environmental protection measure and noise consideration measure of the original 2022 legislation.

The landscaping industry already faces a number of challenges – very tight margins, dependence on regional disposable income, ability to hire seasonal and part-time employees, and a limited “busy season.” The current technology needed to comply with the 2022 legislation is not yet practical in cost, power, or efficiency for large-scale commercial use.

This legislation does not roll back environmental progress. It gives time for battery-powered alternatives to improve while ensuring workers and small businesses aren't unfairly penalized during the transition. We ask for a favorable position on expedited bill 19-25.

Sincerely,



Paula Ross
President & CEO
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