

County Council,

I am writing to you today regarding the leaf blower ban. In this ongoing conversation, some points have been raised that I need to respond to at length.

Point: Landscapers have only had two years to transition from gas-powered leaf blowers to electric models.

Response: This is an utter falsehood. Review the history of climate science: everything we know today about climate change, we knew in the 1970s. Among other facts we knew, a gas-powered leaf blower on idle for 8 minutes can create as much climate pollution as driving an SUV from Montgomery County to Miami. That is clearly unsustainable. The definition of "unsustainable" is "cannot continue forever." Our local landscaping businesses are not being disrupted by action of the County Council; they are being disrupted by the physics of our planet. They have known this for decades and they should have adapted to it 40 years ago. If landscaping businesses are just trying out electric equipment now, then they **are** making the transition at the last minute, and it is not our responsibility to accommodate their tardiness.

Point: Electric leaf blowers are just not powerful enough for autumn leaf removal.

Response: The entire history of lawns is the promotion of standards that weren't possible. As technology advanced, the image of the ideal lawn evolved to remain always just out of reach. Thus property owners continually spent money chasing a goal that wasn't achievable. If technology has now become **less** powerful, standards will change accordingly, and homeowners will adjust their expectations. It should also be noted that a completely leaf-free lawn was never really possible. Even with a gas-powered leaf blower, you blow the leaves off the lawn, and then the tree drops some more. Or you blow the leaves off the lawn, and the wind blows them back. The fact that an objective with no inherent benefit is now even less achievable than it was before is in no way a reason to allow an exemption to the leaf blower ban.

Point: Batteries for electric leaf blowers are too hard to recharge.

Response: For several years now, I've had a fancy device called a smartphone. Maybe you have one too. I try to carry it around and use it, but the battery runs out and the smartphone needs to be recharged several times a day. It's such a pain! Maybe ten years from now batteries will get better and smartphones will achieve widespread adoption. But for now, the technology just isn't ready.

Point: The landscaping industry creates jobs, and the leaf blower ban makes it hard for landscaping companies to do business.

Response: This is simply dangerous logic. The practice of hiring assassins to murder our enemies creates jobs, but we don't see that as a convincing reason why we should make it easier for the Mafia to do business in Montgomery County. As I showed in my previous testimony, the landscaping industry actively harms our community. We are under no obligation to allow this business model to continue just because it creates jobs.

I also want to respond to two points about enforcement of the leaf blower ban.

Point: Taking pictures of violations can endanger immigrants.

Response: This is true and important on its face, and yet it misses the mark. The problem is not that people are taking photographs of immigrants who are breaking the law. The problem is that immigrants are breaking the law. More to the point, the problem is that immigrants are being pressured to break the law. I understand it is already the case that penalties for violations of the leaf blower ban fall on companies, not on individual workers. We need to go beyond this and make it clear to company owners and team bosses that pressuring vulnerable people to break the law simply will not be tolerated. I also need to address the broader point here. It hardly needs to be stated that immigrants do not want to break the law. It's less obvious that immigrants don't want to work for landscaping companies. Why do so many Latino immigrants work for landscaping companies, when poll after poll shows that Latinos overwhelmingly care about the environment? The answer is that they have no better opportunities. Instead of protecting the lousy jobs that immigrants already have, let's create better jobs for our new neighbors. I would love to see a workforce development or job creation program aimed at helping those who have come to our community in search of a better life.

Point: Requiring complainants to come to court makes enforcement of the ban too difficult.

Response: I also agree with this on its face, but I need to offer a warning about the alternative. Where I used to live, the complaint process did not require complainants to appear as witnesses in court. The process did not require complainants to provide any evidence. The process did not even require complainants to give their names. This low-barrier process made it easy for people to submit frivolous complaints just to cause trouble for neighbors they didn't like. As you continue to refine the enforcement process for the leaf blower ban, please seek a balance that allows for meaningful enforcement while preventing people from using the complaint process as a mechanism to attack the least popular person on the block.

Thank you for considering these perspectives on points raised about the leaf blower ban.

Yours,

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