

September 15, 2022

Dear Montgomery County Council:

I write in strong support of Bill 18-22, which would phase out the use of gas powered leaf blowers in our county. When our young family moved to Montgomery County more than a decade ago, we were stunned and dismayed by the near daily and year around disruptive noise of gas powered leaf blowers. They woke up our infant and toddler, often made it impossible to play outdoors with our children, and took away our ability to enjoy our patio or simply being outside for walks or relaxation. The noise was (and is) so loud it cannot be avoided inside one's home either. In fact, we have regularly suffered with two or three gas blowers next door on a single property roaring for more than an hour (at which point we leave our home). I contacted multiple landscapers to politely ask for a change and only one was willing to cut back on the gas blower usage near our home.

Quite simply, this antiquated noisy and polluting technology has rapidly been surpassed by equally powerful, clean, and quiet cordless technology (with an increasing number of thriving county landscapers using the new technology). This is why so many jurisdictions and now states have phased out the gas blowers. The incredible disruption to our qualities of life was made even more apparent during the pandemic when so many were stuck at home for school or work (and when this really should have been addressed). It is absurd that landscapers use the new clean and quiet electric blowers as now required in DC (and Chevy Chase Village) and then a few blocks over in our MoCo neighborhood the same landscapers make us suffer with the gas blowers. There is simply no reason anymore of our county to be a laggard on this issue. In fact, we are already behind when we should be leaders on this issue. No wonder more than 7,000 signed a petition pleading for relief and county leadership on this issue and that so many county council candidates formally supported the pending bill.

We also owe landscape workers something better than continued use of the antiquated unhealthy gas blowers. These are typically some of the most voiceless members of our society (certainly politically and with their employers) who are asked to use these horribly polluting and noisy machines for hours each day (not long ago I saw a young teen in our neighborhood struggling to lug one of these on his back working for a area landscaper). In fact, the county's own Racial Equity and Social Justice Impact Statement recently came to the same conclusion "*OLO anticipates that Bill 18- 22 could narrow racial and social disparities as the benefits of banning gas-powered leaf blowers, particularly for Latinx landscape employees, exceeds the costs of replacing gas-powered leaf blowers for electric ones among Latinx-owned businesses and other landscape contractors, particularly with the Bill's authorization of a grant reimbursement program. As such, OLO does not offer recommended amendments for Bill 18-22.*"

The early evidence from DC is that the transition to the newer technology has gone ahead without disruption to landscapers and residents have noted great improvement in the quality of life in their neighborhoods (ask/read James Fallows of the Atlantic). Continued financial transition and rebate assistance to help our county landscapers make this an even easier decision for moving forward without delay.

Quite simply, you cannot claim to be an environmental or worker rights champion and ignore this legislation. As such, I urge you to support it without any further delay (and make the phase in six months instead of a year).

Thank you,

Chris Homan  
Bethesda, MD