

Submitter: Erin Cushing

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2067

I support HB 2067. Gas powered leaf blowers are a significant source of air and noise pollution. They are hazardous to physical and mental health and the environment. GLBs are entirely unnecessary. Operators of GLBs are most impacted, damaging their hearing, heart, lungs, brain and more. GLBs cause acute and chronic health impacts. The cumulative exposure will have long term health and financial impacts. Cognitive impacts from hearing loss and air pollution alone will limit their future ability to earn money, increase their burden of disease, and exacerbate socioeconomic and racial disparities. This is a health justice / environment health justice / racial justice / social justice issue.

I do not advocate for overuse of electric blowers, but they are far less hazardous than gas. Ideally we all transition towards regenerative landscaping practices, use electric leaf blowers in moderation and in responsible ways, opt towards leaving the leaves and using rakes and other manual tools.

GLBS have a high decibel level and low frequency that permeates walls and windows and travels long distances, disrupting people and animals for blocks. Many GLB operators do not use adequate or any hearing protection. Electric leaf blowers are not as loud and the sound does not travel through structures as much. Electric blowers do not create exhaust (though they do stir up dust, allergens, heavy metals on the roads, etc.). On hot summer days, heat and pollution already create frequent high ozone levels. It's a public health hazard to go outside in neighborhoods with constant use of gas leaf blowers - such as most of Lake Oswego much of the year.

After the initial investment, switching to electric leaf blowers has a relatively short ROI. One study indicated that a commercial landscaper switching to electric had an ROI in about 10.5 months. Then it was cost, maintenance and health savings from then on. Imagine the avoided health costs by reducing public health impacts.

One hour of using a gas-powered leaf blower can emit as much pollution as driving a modern car for 1,100 miles, according to a 2021 report by the California Air Resources Board (CARB). Imagine constant GLBs running in a neighborhood all daylight hours 6 days a week and having no escape from the noise and fumes, often used irresponsibly.

In addition to air pollution, the noise and pollution no doubt impacts wildlife, ecology, soil health, water quality, and climate.

People should have the right to quiet and good air quality, to walk their dogs, enjoy parks, garden or BBQ, focus to work or study, relax, let children and dogs play outside without health hazards, children and shift workers get critical sleep, connect with nature and get daylight and fresh air, ride a bike or access transit, and more without being assaulted by constant gas leaf blowers.

I support HB 2067. It would support the transition to healthier, more climate friendly practices and help take old dirty equipment out of circulation and into proper disposal or recycling. We need to accelerate the transition to healthier, more sustainable practices and this bill does that.