Core Physical Therapy LLC

June 15, 2019

Dear Chair Helm and Members of the House Committee on Energy and Environment:

Thank you for holding a hearing for HB 3350. As an Oregon citizen, health care provider, and mother I support HB 3350.

1. 2-cycle gas powered leaf blowers create noise pollution at a level that is not optimal for human health.
2. Many workers who use 2-cycle gas powered leaf blowers for landscape maintenance have increased risk of adverse health conditions due to particulate exposure and noise.
3. There are better, cost effective alternatives for landscape companies that protect for human health and the overall health of the environment.

Gas powered leaf blowers create noise pollution at a level that is not optimal for human health.

Health data indicates that noise pollution plays a role in many adverse health conditions including high blood pressure, increased risk of atrial fibrillation, and increased stress. As a physical therapist specializing in treating clients with neurological injury and concussions I am well aware that many clients that have sustained concussions have increased headaches, increased cranial pressure due to venous lymphatic congestion, and an increase in sympathetic nervous system activation due to elevation of noise. For a person with a mild concussion, the level of noise generated from a 2-cycle gas leaf blower can be the cause of headaches, cranial pressure, reduced concentration, and reduced memory and recall. Many clients who sustain concussions, which commonly also occur with whiplash due to motor vehicle accidents, have to wear ear plugs when in public to minimize the adverse influence noise has on healing of the brain. This includes the noise from 2-cycle gas powered leaf blowers.

HB 3350 has the potential to support the health of all citizens due to reduced noise pollution.

Many of the workers for landscape maintenance companies that use 2 cycle gas powered leaf blowers have increased risk of adverse health conditions due to exposure to particulates and noise.

The use of 2-cycle gas powered leaf blowers increases exposure of particulates for workers and neighbors. These may include mycotoxins in the form of mold spores, (common in outdoor garden and yard environments and a source of illness for some people) debris, and rodent waste. As the speed of leaf blowers increase and residential windows are open, the risk of indoor mold exposure increases. This is an adverse health condition as some mold spores increase the risk of indoor home mold neurotoxins. While this may not seem like a high risk, about 15% of my clients that I treat for neurological conditions have allergies to mold, and neurotoxins from mold present in their home. All of these indoor mold findings, first originated from outdoor common molds. OPEI recommends dampening an outdoor yard environment before use of a 2-cycle gas powered leaf blower, but this is not a consistent practice. This risk increases in the fall season when leaf blowers are used for controlling leaves that are full of mold spores. One has to wonder what ever happened to rakes?

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The use of 2-cycle gas powered leaf blowers does not promote a safe work environment for many people that may not have additional economic or work opportunities. Often these employees do not have the freedom of choice to use another product such as a battery-operated leaf blower, or a rake to protect their health.

Organizations such as OPEI recommend guidelines of use for 2-cycle gas operated leaf blowers, but often it appears workers are subject to using such tools without protective eye wear, clothing, or masks. Occasionally one may see workers with ear protection to reduce noise, but this is not consistent, and such precautions do not protect neighbors working from home, walking their dog, or biking through a neighborhood.

Support of HB 3350 will protect workers of land maintenance companies from the adverse health effects of using 2-cycle gas powered leaf blowers.

There are cost effective alternatives to 2-cycle gas powered leaf blowers.

Many landscape companies are already making this transition as battery technology improves, and as the owners see the benefit of battery-operated leaf blowers for the health of their employees, and as a way to generate new customers. Many customers now seek green alternatives that support the health of community members and the environment.

Transition from 2-cycle gas powered leaf blowers to battery operated leaf blowers improves human health, promotes safety for workers, and improves air quality. Please support HB 3350.

Sincerely,

Kellie Barnes MOMT, MPT