

Submitter: Rachel Freifelder
On Behalf Of: Handmade Gardens
Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment
Measure: SB525

I am writing in support of SB525. I have worked in the landscape trade since 1998 and in Portland since 2005. I give thanks daily that I get to work outdoors in our beautiful state, whether hot sun, rain, snow, or perfect spring days like the last few.

I and my crews use rakes and brooms to remove debris and we are fully able to leave our job sites clean and tidy. Often, the delight of a day working outdoors is disrupted by the loud noise of a gas-powered leaf blower. It is more than simply unpleasant; it causes stress even when it is blocks away. There is ample science showing that the stress of noise pollution does physical harm to anyone who is exposed to it. I feel for the neighbors who are subjected to this noise.

More harm is done to workers who are issued gas-powered leaf blowers by their employer. In many larger companies, the physical work on the ground is rarely done by the owner or manager. So if the work is harmful, it does not affect them directly. I have often seen crews using gas-powered equipment without adequate hearing or respiratory protection. And if the worker using the leaf blower has protective equipment, the other workers weeding a few feet away may lack it. I've spoken with many of these workers; they are often reluctant to admit, on a job site, that they are suffering, but outside of the job site they affirm the harm that they experience. Because these workers are often very low-income and from marginalized communities, they have little choice of employment and need the job to support themselves and their families.

I have heard other landscape professionals state that gas powered leaf blowers are necessary to their business model. If this is true for any one business, it is because they have invested in the equipment and trained workers to use it, and now they take for granted that "this is how we do things". Many people are simply resistant to change. My company gets the job done without any of this harmful equipment. Furthermore, my clients appreciate that our work does not disrupt their tranquility at home.

Workers that have never used a rake may indeed take slightly longer to get the work done with unfamiliar equipment. The solution is worker training, not harmful equipment. And if cleanup takes an extra minute or two, in the grand scheme of things the well-being of the worker, the neighborhood, and our environment are more important than the very small time savings. For my business, I'm glad that I have saved the expense of purchasing that equipment, and also save the ongoing

expense of maintaining it.

Some cities had the good sense to ban leaf blowers before their use became normalized.

It's not too late. Please pass SB525.