

Submitter: Greg Martin

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment

Measure: SB525

Subject: SB 525-1 – Support

Chair Sollman and Senate Energy & Environment Committee members:

As a Portland resident, I appreciate the committee's focus on the serious public health and environmental impacts of gasoline-powered leaf blowers, and I welcome any momentum the state can create toward the rapid phase-out of these machines in Oregon cities. The preamble of SB 525-1 itemizes very well the reasons for outlawing them. No state that considers itself environmentally progressive should tolerate their operation much longer.

In my neighborhood, I hear the loud drone of these super-polluting machines at all times of the day, rain or shine, throughout the year, even when there are few if any leaves to blow. This is the sound of climate change, and it increases in volume every year. A landscaping crew will typically spend 15 or 20 minutes blowing every leaf, blade of grass, dust particle, and germ throughout the surrounding area. The crews may not be aware of the health risks of using those tools, and many do not wear masks or earplugs to protect themselves.

Alternatives are available. Crews can use electric or battery-powered leaf blowers, which are as powerful as gasoline-powered blowers without all the pollution and noise, and are far cheaper to operate and maintain. Better yet, crews can use rakes and brooms like the ones I use to tend my own lawn and sidewalk.

Efforts to combat climate change and protect public health need to occur block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood, town by town. I have urged the Multnomah County commissioners to direct all county bureaus to shift away from gasoline-powered blowers as quickly as possible, as other large cities have done. SB 525-1 targets a more sweeping goal for private property owners and lawn care businesses.

While I firmly support the aims of SB 525-1, some further changes would improve it. I believe significant financial incentives will be needed to achieve a rapid transition to zero-emission leaf blowers in a fair and equitable manner. The statewide rebate program envisioned in the original bill could play a key role in incentivizing small businesses across the state, and the committee should restore that provision or a similar one. Given the lead time needed to develop such a program, the cutoff date of 1/1/2025 may need to be extended for a year. Also, a system of fines should be sufficient to deter violations, without resorting to possible jail time. I urge the

committee to amend the bill further to address these concerns.

Thank you.

Greg Martin
Portland, Oregon