



House Bill 6263

AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE AND PURCHASE OF GAS-POWERED HAND-HELD OR BACKPACK LEAF BLOWERS BY STATE AGENCIES

**Joint Testimony of the Department of Administrative Services, Department of Energy and
Environmental Protection, and Department of Transportation**

Environment Committee

March 17, 2025

Senator Lopes, Representative Parker, Senator Harding, Representative Callahan, and distinguished members of the Environment Committee. The Department of Administrative Services (DAS), the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), and the Department of Transportation (CTDOT) appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony on **House Bill 6263: An Act Concerning the Use and Purchase of Gas-Powered Hand-Held or Backpack Leaf Blowers by State Agencies**. This proposal requires DAS to develop a plan to phase out the purchase and use of gas-powered leaf blowers by state agencies. The proposed phase-out will take place over two years, starting on January 1, 2027, and beginning January 1, 2029, the use or sale of this equipment will be prohibited.

DAS, DEEP, and CTDOT value the bill's intent as we strive to incorporate sustainability into our agencies' daily operations. However, we have concerns about the implementation of the bill's requirements due to the expected additional costs for the state and the specific needs of our agencies.

The bill specifically targets hand-held and backpack-style gas-powered leaf blowers, and mandates that they be phased out and fully replaced by January 1, 2029. This two-year phase-out period will require the premature retirement of equipment, as it does not take into account devices that are still functional. Additionally, it is unclear whether mixed-fuel devices will also be banned under this legislation.

The replacement of this equipment with non-gas alternatives would lead to both initial and ongoing costs for the state, across state agencies, that are not included in the Governor's proposed budget for FY 26-FY 27.

Regarding specific agency concerns, DAS is worried about the potential impact this legislation may have on businesses that contract with the state. Many of our contracted landscapers are small businesses that, like the state, will face costs to acquire new equipment. As a result, they may be hesitant to continue offering certain services, which could lead to a decrease in the number of businesses available to bid on state contracts. Those vendors that are able to continue providing services, would pass onto the State their additional costs in the form of increased contract costs.

DEEP has piloted electric lawn equipment, including mowers, leaf blowers, and trimmers, in state parks and found them effective, even in adverse conditions such as thick, wet grass. This equipment is



particularly valuable in parks with outdoor educational programs, enabling maintenance work to occur without disrupting outdoor programming.

However, DEEP relies on gas-powered leaf blowers for wildfire suppression, essential for containment lines, safety zones, and fire control. Battery-powered alternatives run for about an hour per charge, requiring 300 minutes to recharge. Battery recharging may be difficult in remote wildfire locations with no grid access. Emergency operations often require continuous use for up to 16 hours, making current battery technology unsuitable for wildfire response.

As with other state agencies, CTDOT is a 24/7 operation that requires equipment and supplies to be available at a moment's notice, including in excess of 100 leaf blowers stationed across the various maintenance garages. CTDOT utilizes leaf blowers in a variety of applications within its ongoing maintenance activities, construction projects, emergency response, and snow removal operations. Leaf blowers serve a key part of the "clean up" activities that keep critical infrastructure free of debris and precipitation, and roadways safe for use by the traveling public. With short battery life, lengthy recharging times, and no power supplies at the vast majority of locations CTDOT staff respond to, gas-powered leaf blowers are the only feasible tool available for CTDOT's agency use today.

We are happy to continue discussions with the bill's proponents, but we urge the Committee to oppose the bill as drafted for the above reasons.