



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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In reply, please refer to:
File:

**Testimony COMMENTING on HB470 HD2
RELATING TO NOISE**

REPRESENTATIVE DAVID A. TARNAS, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Date: February 25, 2025, 2:00P.M.

Conference Room 325

1 **Fiscal Implications:** This measure may impact the priorities identified in the Governor's
2 Executive Budget Request for the Department of Health's (Department) appropriations and
3 personnel priorities. Proposed amendments may require additional resources for staff time
4 and effort.

5

6 **Department Position:** The Department offers the following comments.

7

8 **Department Testimony:** The Environmental Health Services Division, Indoor and Radiological
9 Health Branch (EHSD-IRHB) provides the following testimony on behalf of the Department.

10

11 This measure proposes to revise Chapter 342F, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to: 1) Prohibit the sale
12 of leaf blowers, string trimmers, and weed whackers that do not meet the ANSI B-175.2 Class 1
13 rating beginning July 1, 2028; 2) Increase penalties for violations of leaf blower, string trimmer,
14 and weed whacker operating or sale restrictions; and 3) Prohibit government entities from
15 purchasing leaf blowers, string trimmers, or weed whackers that do not meet the ANSI B-175.2
16 class 1 rating beginning July 1, 2028.

17

18

As stated in our previous testimony, the Department supports the increase to the
penalties for violating operating and other restrictions. The Department also supports the

1 intent of the bill in addressing noise pollution from these devices. The compliance with ANSI B-
2 175.2 class 1 rating requirement, however, unintentionally bans the local sale of all string
3 trimmers and weed whackers and any electrically-powered leaf blowers.

4 The Department acknowledges that our previous testimony suggested that referencing
5 ANSI standards was a viable standard to apply in lieu of a numeric decibel limit, for leaf
6 blowers, string trimmers, and weed whackers. After additional research, the Department has
7 identified that the referenced ANSI B-175.2 Class 1 standard (which is only applicable to gas
8 powered handheld or backpack leaf blowers), does not apply to string trimmers and weed
9 whackers nor to electrically-powered leaf blowers. Further, HB470 HD2 references an outdated
10 ANSI standard that was replaced by the current ANSI B175.2-2012, 4th Edition. The 4th edition
11 ANSI standard no longer includes categories based on classes as referenced in HB470 HD2. As
12 written, compliance with the referenced ANSI rating for gas powered leaf blowers will prevent
13 sale of electric and battery powered devices, all of which may be quieter than their gas-
14 powered equivalents.

15 The Department is very concerned that requiring applying ANSI Class 1 rating
16 requirements in HB470 HD2 to all powered leaf blowers, string trimmers, and weed whackers is
17 inappropriate. The prohibition will harm local businesses by limiting the sale of powered
18 landscaping equipment while allowing procurement of such equipment from non-local dealers.
19 The bill does not prohibit sales by online vendors nor use of loud equipment. It is unclear
20 whether a prohibition of local sales will substantively reduce noise pollution that is targeted by
21 this bill.

22 One of the challenges of imposing a decibel-level restriction on leaf blowers, string
23 trimmers, and weed whackers is the absence of noise limits as part of design standards. Unlike
24 voltage or horsepower information, manufacturers are not required to include decibel/sound
25 levels on equipment labels which makes it even further difficult to determine which pieces of
26 equipment meet any created noise limitations. This makes regulating these products simply
27 through noise ratings impractical and presents a regulatory problem.

1 Please note that the Department has only received 52 total documented complaints
2 regarding noise pollution from leaf blowers over the past four years (2020-2024). Based on an
3 analysis of the complaints received, the issue of noise from the referenced sources is not a
4 statewide problem but one primarily impacting urban areas.

5 To address these issues, the Department suggests the amendment below. The
6 suggested amendment retains the increased penalties proposed in HB470 HD2 but removes
7 prohibitions on sales. If prohibiting the local sale of leaf blowers, string trimmers and weed
8 whackers is desired, the Department is willing to convene a working group with County
9 representatives to make recommendations for a future amendment to control noise pollution
10 from such sources.

11
12 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

13 **Offered Amendments:**

14
15 **"§342F-30.8 Leaf blowers; string trimmers; weed whackers; restrictions[.] on operation;**
16 **prohibition on sale.** (a) In any urban land use district, as designated pursuant to section 205-2,
17 it shall be unlawful for any person to operate a leaf blower or weed whacker within a
18 residential zone or within one hundred feet of a residential zone in the State, except between
19 the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. on any day except Sunday or a state or federal holiday,
20 and between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. on Sunday or any state or federal holiday;
21 provided that government entities, and agents acting on behalf of government entities, may
22 use weed whackers during the prohibited hours in the case of an emergency as defined in
23 section 127A-2.
24 ~~—(b) Beginning July 1, 2028, it shall be unlawful for any person to sell a leaf blower, string~~
25 ~~trimmer, or weed whacker that does not meet the ANSI B 175.2 class 1 rating.~~

1 ~~[(b)](c)~~(b) Violators shall be fined ~~[\$50]~~ \$100 for the first violation, ~~[\$100]~~ \$250 for the
2 second violation, ~~[\$200 for the third violation,]~~ and \$500 for each subsequent violation.

3 ~~[(c)](d)~~(c) Government entities, and agents acting on behalf of government entities, shall not
4 be subject to ~~[this section]~~ subsection (a) as it applies to leaf blowers. Beginning July 1, 2028,
5 government entities shall not purchase a leaf blower, string trimmer, or weed whacker that
6 does not meet the ANSI B 175.2 class 1 rating.

7 ~~[(d)](e)~~(d) Any county may adopt a rule or ordinance that places stricter limitations on the
8 use of leaf blowers or weed whackers than are in this section. In case of a conflict between the
9 requirements or limitations of this section and any county rule or ordinance regarding the use
10 of leaf blowers or weed whackers, the more restrictive requirements shall apply.
11



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 02/25/2025

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 325 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Bill Title: HB 0470, HD2 RELATING TO NOISE.

Purpose of Bill: Beginning 7/1/2028, prohibits the sale of any leaf blower, string trimmer, or weed whacker that does not meet the ANSI B-175.2 class 1 rating. Increases fines for violations of leaf blower, string trimmer, and weed whacker restrictions. Beginning 7/1/2028, prohibits government entities from purchasing leaf blowers, string trimmers, or weed whackers that do not meet the ANSI B-175.2 class 1 rating. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD2)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) respectfully provides comments on HB 470, HD 2.

The Department recognizes that the sound emissions from leaf blowers, string trimmers, and weed whackers have a harmful impact on public health and welfare.

While the Department supports the overall concept of HB 470, HD 2, the Department is concerned about the future cost to replace the inventory of leaf blowers, string trimmers, and weed whackers for schools throughout the state including those in urban land use districts once these restrictions are put in place.

The Department is also concerned about the increase in inefficiency since battery-operated handheld equipment does not operate at the commercial-grade strength necessary to maintain larger school campuses. The batteries also need to be recharged frequently and have shorter life spans.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 470, HD 2.

HB-470-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 1:25:00 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eileen Hilton	Windward Coalition	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Tarnas,

Hawai'i House Bill 470 (HB470) to reduce noise pollution from specific landscaping equipment (leaf blower, string trimmer, and weed whacker).

The Windward Coalition is overall in favor of HB470 because:

- **Excessive noise from leaf blowers, string trimmers, and weed whackers, negatively impact public health and quality of life.**
- **It helps phase out gas-powered equipment resulting in improved air quality.**

Our observation is that while electric equipment is generally not more costly than gas-powered equipment and does not require a learning curve reservations include:

- **Adverse economic impact on smaller landscaping businesses which must replace still functional gas equipment in 2028.**
- **Unclear mechanism of how and who would monitor and enforce the new regulations.**

We support HB470 but believe that the bill should be amended to improve fairness and feasibility of enforcement.

Eileen Hilton, MD

President, Windward Coalition



**TESTIMONY OF TINA YAMAKI
PRESIDENT
RETAIL MERCHANTS OF HAWAII
FEBRUARY 25, 2025
HB 470 HD2 RELATING TO NOISE**

Aloha, Chair Tarnas and members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs. I am Tina Yamaki, President of the Retail Merchants of Hawaii and I appreciate this opportunity to testify.

The Retail Merchants of Hawaii was founded in 1901 and is a statewide, not for profit trade organization committed to supporting the growth and development of the retail industry in Hawaii. Our membership includes small mom & pop stores, large box stores, resellers, luxury retail, department stores, shopping malls, on-line sellers, local, national, and international retailers, chains, and everyone in between.

We respectfully oppose HB 470 HD2. This measure beginning 7/1/2028, prohibits the sale of any leaf blower, string trimmer, or weed whacker that does not meet the ANSI B-175.2 class 1 rating; increases fines for violations of leaf blower, string trimmer, and weed whacker restrictions,; beginning 7/1/2028, prohibits government entities from purchasing leaf blowers, string trimmers, or weed whackers that do not meet the ANSI B-175.2 class 1 rating; and is effective 7/1/3000.

This measure is leading to a ban on non-electric powered leaf blowers, string trimmers and weed whackers. **This measure would mean that on or before July 1, 2028, retailers could no longer sell them. Measures like this would impose especially hardship on our small locally owned businesses, especially if they are unable to meet the deadline to liquidate their inventory.** Not all stores are able to send their non electric leaf blowers, string trimmers and weed whackers outside of Hawaii to a sister store. **This would mean that all their gas-powered inventory either must be sold at deeply discounted prices or at a loss or become trashed. This measure has the potential to kill many small locally owned businesses who are already struggling to keep their doors open with rising costs of goods, shipping, minimum wage, health insurance and other operating costs. They cannot afford another unexpected added expense or loss.** Retailers listen to what their customers want. Technology still needs to be worked on.

Hawaii does NOT have the typical changing seasons like they do on the mainland, and we must take that into consideration. We live in a state that has lush greenery all year round. Because of this, we see many residents and businesses in residential areas hiring small locally owned landscaping businesses to ensure the maintenance of their property.

While there are choices for electric leaf blowers, string trimmers and weed whackers on the market for residential use, **there are limited choices on heavy duty commercial equipment on the market.** These items are extremely expensive at almost double the price of a gas-powered leaf blower, string trimmers and weed whackers. In addition, batteries need constant charging, and some leaf blowers, weed whackers and string trimmers are not as powerful to truly be useful. Most cordless electric or battery-powered leaf blowers have about a 20–45-minute run time per charge while weed whackers and string trimmers have a 35-minute run time per charge. Upgrading to a larger battery will make the equipment heavier. Corded electric equipment can only reach as far as the length of their power cords, limiting the range of movement and potentially hindering access to certain areas of a property. This can result in reduced efficiency and increased time needed to complete tasks, particularly for larger properties or heavy-duty cleaning jobs.

With the push to change to electric powered goods, we wonder what is going to happen to all those lithium batteries that can no longer hold a charge and are discarded. It is our understanding that Hawaii does NOT currently have a recycling program or location for Lithium Batteries. These types of batteries can be prone to overheating and catching fire, especially if damaged or exposed to extreme conditions. This can lead to safety hazards, such as fires or explosions. In addition, we do not want to see them discarded in our landfills as improper disposal of lithium-ion batteries can lead to environmental pollution. If not recycled properly, the chemicals within the batteries can leach into the soil and water, causing harm to ecosystems.

We respectfully ask that you hold this measure. Mahalo again for this opportunity to testify.

HB-470-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/21/2025 2:11:10 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victor Brock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill. Vendors will have 3 years to clear out their inventory of old product, which is more than enough time.

HB-470-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/21/2025 4:27:11 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cathy Goeggel	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please, please help stop the noise and pass HB470 HD2

HB-470-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 2:46:48 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
lynne matusow	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Now that the original bill has been amended, I fully support it. Originally it exempted government entities, which are a big part of the problem. That was been deleted in HD1. I beg you not to reinsert it.

However, I have a problem with the language residential zone. I live on the outskirts of Chinatown in Honolulu. We are zoned BMX3, business mixed use. There are many residential high rise condos and rental buildings in the area. Are we excluded because our zoning does not say residential. As more housing is built, the residents will be in area not zoned residential. You should amend this bill to say within 100 feet of residences comprising at least six units.

Many studies show that noise is a major concern in people's health. You must work to protect us, not getting us sicker.

HB-470-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 8:36:32 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gregory Misakian	Individual	Comments	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I am requesting you amend this bill to include early trash pickup by any trash removal contractor, which should not begin before 6:00 AM. This pervasive and concerning issue has been brought to the attention of many, including Senator Sharon Moriwaki, Representative Adrian Tam, City Council Chair Tommy Waters, Mayor Blangiardi, Managing Director Mike Formby and others, and nothing has been done about it.

Selectively choosing what makes the noise is just not sound legislation. Addressing all excessive noise sources in the early AM and late at night should be the goal.

Quite simply, any noise ordinance should be for all undesirable noise that is a nuisance, and there are already laws on the books that are not being enforced. Please amend those laws and please ensure they are enforced.

Gregory Misakian

To: The Honorable Chair David Tarnas, the Honorable Vice Chair Mahina Poepoe, and Members of the Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs.

From: Ted Bohlen

Re: Hearing **HB470 HD2 RELATING TO NOISE**

Hearing: Tuesday February 24, 2024 2:00 p.m., CR329

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs!

As one of among the many thousands of Hawaii's urban and suburban residents affected by noisy leafblowers, **I SUPPORT HB470 HD2 and propose amendments!**

For 15 years, I represented the Department of Health on water pollution and other matters. Another less-recognized but also significant form of pollution is excessive noise, which can impair public health and well-being in various ways.

Excessive noise can cause hearing loss, interfere with human activities at home, work, and in schools, and annoy, awaken, anger, and frustrate individuals.

Excessive noise detracts from the quality of life for residents of the State and its environment.

The sound emissions from noisy leaf blowers, weed whackers and string trimmers are a nuisance and are impairing the State's public health and welfare in many communities. Some leaf blowers, weed whackers, and string trimmers operate at approximately ninety decibels, which can cause hearing damage after two hours of exposure. According to the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, noise intensity is a particularly troubling issue for landscaping workers.

There are viable, quieter alternatives to loud leaf blowers and string trimmers, some gasoline-powered as well as many electric, among makers such as Echo, Black and Decker, Stihl, Greenworks, Ryobi, DK2, Craftsman, Litheli, and Ego. The technology for quieter models is improving. Additional quiet and effective options will likely be available before this bill's restrictions on sales for louder models becomes effective in July 2028. Three years is sufficient time for retailers to adjust their inventory of sales models. The bill does not restrict usage of existing equipment, only sales three years in the future.

AMENDMENTS: The HD2 substituted the "American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standard B175.2 class one" for manufacturers' ratings of 65 weighted decibels at 50 feet (dBA rather than decibels dB). Weighted decibels (dBA) is preferable to decibels (dB) because it considers the varying sensitivity of the human ear to different frequencies of sound, with lower weighting for low and high frequencies. **The bill should be amended to restore the 65 dBA rather than the "ANSI standard B175.2 class one" in HD2 because the ANSI standard can change without notice, may no longer have classes, and may not apply at all to string trimmers or weed whackers. The bill should instead read on page 3 lines 4-6:**

(b) Beginning July 1, 2028, it shall be unlawful for any person to sell a leaf blower, string trimmer, or weed whacker rated by its manufacturer at greater than sixty-five weighted decibels (dBA) when measured at a distance of fifty feet."

Also, on page 3 lines 12-15:

Beginning July 1, 2028, government entities shall not purchase a leaf blower, string trimmer, or weed whacker that is rated by its manufacturer at greater

than sixty-five weighted decibels (dBA) when measured at a distance of fifty feet."

This bill does not prohibit usage of existing equipment. This bill would only regulate future sales of noisy leaf blowers and string trimmers after a reasonable period for adjustment. It would serve the public interest by helping to reduce the nuisance and harm to public health and well-being caused by noisy leaf blowers, weed whackers, and string trimmers.

Please pass this bill!

Mahalo!

Ted Bohlen

HB-470-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 4:29:50 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chris Abe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

With electric battery technology, this regulation to phase out unnecessarily noisy leaf blowers and weed wackers is long overdue.

HB-470-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 6:41:57 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
christopher mcdougall	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

As I write, I'm surrounded by the roar of three gas leaf blowers operating on our street, as they do at all hours nearly every day. It's still a strange exception to noise regulations: nothing else in residential life is allowed to be that loud, not cars or motorcycles or backyard parties. Only leaf blowers — and for what? What vital function are they performing that allows them to violate everyone else's right to a reasonably quiet existence?

For me, this is a quality of life issue that needs to be addressed. Gas leaf blowers have now been banned in 12 states nationwide and thousands of municipalities for two reasons:

1) Noise: they operate at decibel levels that exceed legal limits. Plus, their low-frequency sound allows the noise to penetrate walls and windows, making it impossible to block out. Those of us who work at home, or have napping keiki, or teens who need to study, or older kupuna trying to rest, are constantly dealing with this deafening noise that goes on for hours a day, every day.

2) Environmental damage: leaf blowers emissions have been proven tremendously harmful for the environment. I'm attaching a Washington Post story with more information.

For us here on Oahu, it's an even bigger problem because we live so close together. The roar from one leafblower can drown out conversations in dozens of houses. Many times I've been high on the Pillbox trail and the only sound I can hear are leafblowers in Lanikai. By law, shouldn't they already be illegal in residential neighborhoods? The current Oahu Noise Code sets a limit of 55 decibels in residential areas. Gas leaf blowers operate at anywhere from 65-100 decibels. My simple request is this: Let's ban commercial leaf blowers in residential neighborhoods. No other business could ever operate in a residential area at the same volume without being shut down.

This is the kind of legislative action that truly benefits local residents.