



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

**Testimony COMMENTING on HB470
RELATING TO NOISE**

REPRESENTATIVE NICOLE E. LOWEN, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
Hearing Date: 1/28/2025 Room Number: 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 staff time and effort.

4 **Department Testimony:**

5 The Department respectfully comments on this measure that proposes to revise Chapter
6 342F, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to increase penalties, repeal the exemption provided for
7 government agencies, and prohibit the sale of leaf blowers, string trimmers, and weed whackers
8 that are rated by their manufacturers at greater than sixty-five weighted decibels (dBA) when
9 measured at a distance of fifty feet.

10 The Department supports the intent of the bill in addressing potentially harmful noise
11 generated by leaf blowers, string trimmers, and weed whackers. However, a prohibition on sales
12 of these types of equipment based solely on decibel level may have unintended consequences
13 and require additional resources for the Department to implement. Further, a prohibition against
14 local sales may not eliminate possession of equipment that does not meet the intended decibel
15 limitation given the availability of e-commerce.

16 In order to impose stricter noise restrictions, several municipalities throughout the Nation
17 reference industry standards such as ANSI Standard B-175.2, which has a maximum noise level
18 of 65 dBA (Class 1) and 70 dBA (Class 2) as measured at 50 feet, to regulate noise emissions
19 from hand-held and backpack gasoline engine powered leaf blowers. Enforcement is performed
20 by their local police departments in most cases. Prohibiting the sale of leaf blowers which do not

1 meet the ANSI B-175.2 rating will lead to a gradual decline of current equipment as they fail and
2 provides a known standard for product compliance. Prohibition of product sales based only on
3 decibel level may require the Department to develop an inspection program where retailers may
4 have their equipment inspected and verified to meet the noise standard. Implementation of such
5 a program will require additional personnel and equipment.

6 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

7

8 **Offered Amendments:** None



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

Date: 01/28/2025

Time: 09:00 AM

Location: 325 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Energy & Environmental
Protection

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Bill Title: HB 0470 RELATING TO NOISE.

Purpose of Bill: Increases fines for violations of leaf blower, string trimmer, and weed whacker restrictions. Repeals the exemptions for government entities and their agents from these restrictions. Beginning 7/1/2028, prohibits the sale of any leaf blower, string trimmer, or weed whacker that is rated by its manufacturer at greater than sixty-five dbA when measured at fifty feet.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) respectfully provides comments on HB 0470.

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, the Department is concerned about the cost to replace the existing inventory of leaf blowers, string trimmers, and weed whackers for schools throughout the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 0470.



**TESTIMONY OF TINA YAMAKI
PRESIDENT
RETAIL MERCHANTS OF HAWAII
JANUARY 28, 2025
HB 470 RELATING TO NOISE**

Good morning, Chair Lowen and members of the House Committee on Energy and Environmental Protection. 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. This measure increases fines for violations of leaf blower, string trimmer, and weed whacker restrictions. Repeals the exemptions for government entities and their agents from these restrictions. Beginning 7/1/2028, prohibits the sale of any leaf blower, string trimmer, or weed whacker that is rated by its manufacturer at greater than sixty-five dbA when measured at fifty feet.

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.

To: The Honorable Chair Nicole Lowen, the Honorable Vice Chair Amy Perruso, and Members of the Committee on Energy and Environment.

From: Ted Bohlen

Re: Hearing **HB470 RELATING TO NOISE**

Hearing: Tuesday January 27, 2024 9:00 a.m., CR325

Aloha Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Perruso, and Members of the Committee on Energy and Environment:

I SUPPORT HB470!

For 15 years, I represented the Department of Health on water pollution and other matters. Another less-recognized 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 and string trimmers are a nuisance and are impairing the State's public health and welfare in many communities. Some leaf blowers 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.**

The purpose of this Act is to:

- (1) Increase penalties for violations of leaf blower restrictions;
- (2) Repeal the exemption of government agencies from leaf blower restrictions;
and
- (3) Beginning July 1, 2028, prohibit the sale of leaf blowers and string trimmers that are rated by their manufacturers at greater than sixty-five weighted decibels (dBA) when measured at a distance of fifty feet.

This provision follows the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standard B175.2 class one of 65 weighted decibels at 50 feet (dBA rather than decibels dB). DBA is preferable because it considers the varying sensitivity of the human ear to different frequencies of sound, with lower weighting for low and high frequencies.

This bill does not prohibit usage of existing equipment. It does not prohibit sales of leaf blowers and string trimmers based on fuel type or air pollution and so is not preempted by the Clean Air Act.

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 and string trimmers.

Please pass this bill!

Mahalo!

Ted Bohlen

HB-470

Submitted on: 1/25/2025 5:37:27 PM

Testimony for EEP on 1/28/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kevin Faccenda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure.

HB-470

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 12:27:41 PM

Testimony for EEP on 1/28/2025 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

This bill does not go far enough. While fines are increased, which is great, other areas are watered down.

Government entities are a big part of the problem. Exempting them now, is absurd. Many studies show that noise is a major concern in people's health. You should be working to protect us, not getting us sicker. You and government agencies work for us, not the other way around. The current item 2 (c) should not be deleted. The new language for that section is great and I urge you to keep it.

HB-470

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 12:39:10 PM

Testimony for EEP on 1/28/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacqueline S. Ambrose	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

YES to - Increases fines for violations of leaf blower, string trimmer, and weed whacker restrictions. Repeals the exemptions for government entities and their agents from these restrictions. Beginning 7/1/2028, prohibits the sale of any leaf blower, string trimmer, or weed whacker that is rated by its manufacturer at greater than sixty-five dbA when measured