

Chairman Blessing, Vice Chairman Reineke, and members of the committee, I am Ken Sprague, President of Hamburg Fireworks Display in Lancaster, Ohio and President of the Ohio State Pyrotechnics Association. Thank you for today's opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 226.

On behalf of my company, as well as the Ohio State Pyrotechnics Association, I would like to express our support and appreciation for Representatives Seitz and Sweeney's effort to address some of the issues with Ohio's decades old fireworks law.

Other than Pennsylvania, which only allows the use of ground based consumer fireworks; every state bordering Ohio allows the use of the full line of consumer fireworks, and Pennsylvania currently has legislation introduced that would allow the use of consumer fireworks within the state. Ohio has allowed the sale of consumer fireworks for almost 40 years and has 50 licenses that are able to sell consumer fireworks, but does not permit the use of any consumer fireworks in the state. This is a dated approach to business that should be addressed.

Establishing a study group comprised of stakeholders in Ohio's fireworks industry to meet annually and discuss relevant issues to those involved in the fireworks business is a common sense approach to enhancing the relationship between the fireworks industry and enforcement community. Having the ability to discuss such matters as legal consumer fireworks use, how additional storage licenses for 1.3G display fireworks may actually improve safety conditions in Ohio, the fireworks license moratorium, building code requirements, and any and all things relating to Ohio's fireworks industry can only be productive for everyone who is, and has, invested in this industry.

The dissolution of the moratorium is a topic that always garners much discussion, and I think that the members of the legislature would be surprised to hear that the fireworks community is more open to this discussion than what is thought. What we have serious concerns with is an immediate, wholesale, end to the moratorium that would dramatically, and instantly, change the landscape of the Ohio fireworks industry. Small companies, like myself, would be put out of business from one season to the next by an influx of larger companies and out of state companies that would come in and immediately secure better locations than many of us here in Ohio are currently licensed for. Many licensees would have liked to move to better, more commercially viable locations, but under Ohio's law we haven't been able to.

We believe the proposed study group represents a fair and balanced makeup of those that are directly involved with, and invested in, Ohio's Fireworks industry. With the exception of Prevent Blindness, everyone proposed is either a member of the fireworks industry, or a regulator of the fireworks industry, and has direct involvement and first-hand knowledge of all matters related to the industry. That is a recipe for productive discourse and mutual exchange of ideas that can only serve to benefit everyone involved.

In closing, being in a fireworks display business I have watched Ohio lead the way in safety practices by implementing licensure, stability standards and passing legislature to ensure the safety of all Ohio residents. By creating a new committee we will be ensuring the safety record will continue to be held to the high standard that other states will model their safety practices after in years to come.

Again, I thank you for your time today and I urge you to vote "yes" for House Bill 226.

Sincerely, Ken Sprague