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Jeff Klein, President
Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association
House Bill 226 Proponent Testimony
House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee

Chairman Blessing, Vice-Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Clyde, and members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 226.

My name is Jeff Klein and I am the President of the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association and a Fire Chief for the City of Perrysburg. The OFCA exists to improve the safety of Ohio by leading, representing, educating, and supporting Ohio's fire chiefs and emergency services.

House Bill 226 does numerous things. First, the bill extends the moratorium on the issuance of a license as a fireworks manufacturer or wholesaler until July 1, 2020. Second, it creates a Fireworks Study Group that will meet during the moratorium so we can collaborate with the interested parties to determine how to properly update Ohio's fireworks laws. After going unchanged for almost 20 years, manufacturers, wholesalers, and consumers in Ohio will all benefit from the work of this study group to update Ohio's fireworks laws.

Fireworks safety is paramount to our association. The current moratorium ends on December 15, 2017, so it is imperative that we act quickly to extend this moratorium, but also make sure that we have the proper laws in place that may allow consumers to use fireworks safely in Ohio. The creation of the study group will allow us time to make sure that we have proper education and protections in place for Ohioans.

As fireworks have been illegal in Ohio, there has not been a statewide campaign to educate the public on safe practices. House Bill 226 mandates the State Fire Marshal create safety materials to educate Ohioans about the proper use of consumer fireworks. These materials must be distributed to any purchaser of fireworks in Ohio at the point of sale. Additionally, there are associated penalties for manufacturer or wholesalers who fail to comply with these provisions.

You will hear testimony about injuries associated with the use of fireworks. These injuries are occurring under current laws and regulations. It is our position House Bill 226 can decrease injuries by allowing the fireworks industry and public safety forces to educate the public how best to protect them, and their loved ones.



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The Ohio Fire Chiefs have requested an amendment that would give the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association the appointing authority for our seat on the study group and provide the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association with one additional seat, so that we can also appoint a code expert from our association to work with the study group. With the insertion of this amendment, the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association offers our full support for House Bill 226.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I would be happy to answer any questions.