

TESTIMONY STATEMENT OF SARAH TACKETT
Concerned Citizen, Springfield, OH
HB 253—Fireworks Legalization and Regulation
June 3, 2020

In continued opposition of HB253 for the following reasons:

1. Fireworks have a detrimental effect on our pets and wildlife. The noise from fireworks causes a great amount of fear, stress and anxiety in animals, often causing a “flight” response.
2. Children and adults with sensory issues, such as those seen on the autism spectrum, find fireworks to be an assault on the senses rather than a good time. The sudden noises and brightly colored patterns, mixed with the ambient darkness can actually feel physically painful for those with sensory issues.
3. The mere fact of additional increase in physical injuries such as the loss of fingers, a hand, or even an eye is a high price to pay for legalization of fireworks.
4. It can end up being an additional burden on our first responders. Fireworks burn down houses, damage entertainment venues, frighten children and adults, cause brushfires, noise from fireworks can cause distress, especially when fireworks sound like gunfire.
5. **The main and most important reason that legalization of fireworks is a horrible idea is the effect on our veterans who suffer with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).** It is unfortunately common in veterans who have seen combat, affecting up to 20% of those who served in Afghanistan or Iraq, and up to 30% of Vietnam veterans according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. A hallmark of PTSD is the tendency to experience flashbacks to the traumatic event, which are triggered by environmental stimuli. For war veterans, the bursts of light and explosive sounds of fireworks can easily trigger a flashback to combat.

There is no question that fireworks for some with PTSD are a trigger and cause flashbacks. The rate of suicide among our veterans is at a rate of about one and half times that of the civilian community. These are individuals who have sacrificed much, many the loss of their families for inability to cope with some of the stresses, when they return home.

When I hear that “people are going to discharge fireworks anyhow, so we may as well legalize it,” then the same should be true for those that use cocaine or drive drunk, should we legalize that?

I have not spoken to one person that wants this bill passed. Instead they would prefer that it be put on the ballot for everyone to vote on it. The loud voice of the Fireworks industry should NOT outweigh the voices and desires of our Ohio citizens.

For these reasons, I’m pleading with you to NOT support House Bill 253 to legalize fireworks 365 days a year. If there is an overwhelming need to approve something, I would recommend legalizing fireworks *limited from 1-7 Jul each year*. I would also encourage you to look at other states that may have already passed this legislation. Is it worth the lives of our veterans for the pleasure of a few? I believe this bill is reckless and should not be passed.