

To: Members of the Ohio Senate Transportation, Commerce, and Workforce Committee

Fr: Monica Hueckel, Director of Government Relations, Ohio State Medical Association
Joe Rosato, Director of Government Relations, Ohio State Medical Association

Da: May 29, 2019

Re: SB 72

On behalf of the nearly 16,000 physician, resident and medical student members of the Ohio State Medical Association (OSMA), we are writing in opposition to Senate Bill 72, legislation that our association and many others in the health care community believe is not in the best interest of Ohio citizens. SB 72 seeks to legalize the discharge of fireworks in Ohio, and if enacted would actually make Ohio one of the most unrestricted states for fireworks discharge.

Average Ohioans have not supported this or past measures seeking to legalize fireworks discharge, and although some citizens may ignore the current law, having a statewide prohibition on fireworks discharge in place communicates that it is a dangerous activity not condoned in our state. Although numerous other states allow for some fireworks discharge by citizens, many states have limitations such as specific times and dates during which fireworks may be discharged, or permitting only specific types of devices to be discharged. SB 72 contains no such restrictions.

Additionally, the OSMA is concerned that the bill bypasses classifications of fireworks adopted by the Consumer Products Safety Commission, as it would allow certain types of consumer grade fireworks to be sold outside of fireworks retail locations, which are subject to strict fire code regulations in order to ensure safety.

Furthermore, studies conducted in other states have shown that legalization of fireworks discharge has resulted in a marked increase in both frequency and severity of fireworks-related injuries. It is important to note that approximately 50% of fireworks-related injuries happen to bystanders not participating directly in the activity, and about 1 in 3 fireworks-related injuries are to children. Our Governor and the current administration, along with many in the Ohio Legislature, have initiated strong, bipartisan efforts to protect and improve the lives of Ohio children. We are alarmed that this bill seems to stand in contrast to these goals by increasing the risk fireworks pose to children in our state.

In conclusion, we encourage the Senate to remove the language regarding legalization of fireworks discharge from SB 72. We would like to thank Chairman McColley, Vice Chair Uecker, Ranking Member Antonio and other members of the committee for their time and attention to our comments on this bill. As always, the OSMA is grateful for the opportunity to be meaningful contributors to the legislative process. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.