



Chairman McColley, Vice Chair Uecker, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Ohio Senate Transportation, Commerce, and Workforce Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on Senate Bill 72. My name is David Maywhoor, Executive Director, Ohio Public Health Association. Our mission is to ensure the optimal health of all Ohioans and to be the inclusive voice for public health in Ohio. I am submitting these comments on behalf of the Association.

SB 72 includes new language allowing some types of consumer grade fireworks to be sold outside of fireworks retail locations. Until now, only novelty fireworks were able to be sold in traditional retail locations, however SB 72 would circumvent classifications adopted by the US Consumer Products Safety Commission. Seeing these consumer grade fireworks in our grocery stores and supermarkets, as well as other retail establishments, appears to give state sanction and seems to affirm their safety.

From a public health perspective, it is chilling indeed that half of all fireworks injuries are to innocent bystanders, with nearly one-third impacting our most vulnerable citizens, our children. The Ohio Public Health Association is generally supportive of the efforts of Governor DeWine and the General Assembly in prioritizing child health and wellness. This bill seems to conflict with those goals and would in fact undermine much of the strong, bipartisan work that is being done to protect Ohio's children. These products should only be sold in fireworks retail locations, which are subject to strict fire code regulations.

The bill also creates a study committee that includes some representatives from public health and fire safety groups but is dominated by fireworks industry officials. Even if everyone agreed on changes in the study committee, it would require additional legislative action to make changes. It seems much more logical to have a study committee meet and develop recommendations before pursuing any additional statutory changes.

If enacted, SB 72 would make Ohio one of the most open states for fireworks discharge. While it's true that many states allow for some type of discharge of consumer grade fireworks, most of those states place restrictions on the times and dates of discharge, limit the types of products that can be discharged, and limit the times of year when fireworks can be purchased. SB 72 contains no such restrictions.

Proponents of SB 72, who represent the fireworks industry, remain focused on industry-related regulatory matters including the permitting process under the Ohio Department of Commerce. There have not been calls to legalize discharge from average Ohioans or in testimony submitted for SB 72 or past fireworks measures. I encourage the committee to remove fireworks discharge provisions from SB 72 and instead focus on other issues related to the fireworks industry.

In closing, I want to note that many state and national nonprofit health organizations recommend that fireworks should be left to professional handlers. I want to stress that passage of SB 72 is not in the best interest of Ohio children and families. Having a statewide prohibition on the purchase and discharge of fireworks by the public sends a clear message that this is a dangerous activity and should be avoided. Past similar attempts have consistently failed, and I hope you will reject this latest effort.

Thank you for your time in reviewing this testimony. David Maywhoor, Executive Director Ohio Public Health Association. For questions please email me at [dmaywhoor@ohiopha.org](mailto:dmaywhoor@ohiopha.org) or call 614-738-0100.