

TESTIMONY OF JAY NORTHUP
Fireworks Injury Victim
HB 172—Fireworks Legalization and Regulation
April 21, 2021

Chairman Stein, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan and members of the House Commerce and Labor Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in opposition of House Bill 172, which would make changes to Ohio's fireworks law.

My name is Jay Northup and I am Captain of the City of Euclid Fire Department. In the summer of 2016, my family and I were hosting our annual Fourth of July party, which always included a fireworks display. As in years past, I went behind our shed to set off the fireworks. Setting off fireworks at our party was tradition and I was sure to do so safely. I had all the kids up front by the garage to make sure no one would get hurt, never thinking it would be me instead.

When the fireworks display was ending, I noticed the last couple of tubes were not igniting. I decided to take a closer look to determine the problem. As I peeled the paper back on the firework, the tube ignited. I was only 12 inches away from the tube when it ignited, so it hit me right in the face.

Immediately after it happened, I remember thinking to myself that I was going to die. I didn't even know where I was or what had just happened. I got on my hands and knees and then heard one of my friends yelling at me, asking if I was okay. I just got hit in the face with a mortar, so no, I was not okay. I told him no and asked him to get my wife.

My wife, an emergency room nurse, immediately took me to the emergency room at MetroHealth Medical Center in Cleveland. The front of my eye suffered a contusion that deformed the front of the eye, and it took time and several medical procedures to heal. I am so grateful to the medical staff because if it wasn't for them I could have lost my vision in my eye.

While it is still difficult to look back on that day, I still want to share my message, it's not worth it. Legalizing the discharge of fireworks will only lead to more injuries like mine. Instead of passing a law to allow for discharge, we should be spreading the message that fireworks are not safe to set off in your own yard. We should be encouraging people to leave fireworks to the professional fireworks shows. Do not think it won't happen to you.

I am a trained firefighter with 26 years of experience as a paramedic and 24 years of experience as a firefighter. If anyone should know how to use fireworks safely it should be me. However, I learned the hard way... almost losing my life and changing its course forever, that there is no safe way to discharge consumer fireworks and we are fooling the public if we give them this impression.

I urge you not to pass House Bill 172, but instead, encourage your constituents to obey the law and don't play with backyard fireworks.

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Firefighter Jay Northup just a few hours after the explosion and being admitted to the Level 1 Trauma Center at Metro Health in Cleveland.

Thomas Steinemann, MD, examines firefighter Jay Northup's eyes to monitor his vision and his recovery as he continues to heal from the fireworks explosion that almost blinded him.

