

Good morning,

My name is Quay Barnes. I am the Chair of the Mideast Area Commission or MAC. The MAC is comprised of 17 contiguous neighborhoods representing over 50,000 residents. We are located roughly between Bexley and Whitehall, just south of John Glenn Airport and a little south of I-70.

I am a community leader, a boots on the ground person dealing daily with neighborhood concerns. I am surprised to be here even talking in opposition to this bill. This was not even supposed to be on my plate.

You ask, "what's on your plate?". How about the lack of low-income livable housing, or food insecurity from lack of grocery stores? My residential roads are becoming Indy 500 raceways, and do I need to mention the crime and violence in all our areas and how it is affecting our youth? All of these are the challenges I and my leaders must deal with and attempt to solve or at least decrease. Why aren't you helping to remove some of THOSE items off our plate?

Fireworks were not even on our radar. And should not be. Why would you do this? And I guess you are trying to appease us by restricting the use of fireworks on designated holidays. May I ask which residential communities were complaining that New Year's Eve and 4th of July was not enough? The housing in the neighborhoods in the MAC areas sit between 10 to 20 feet apart. Let me repeat that – 10 to 20 feet apart! Fireworks that are being set off at one location easily affect many properties surrounding it. I receive many calls and emails from frustrated residents. Here is just one of them:

"Last night was probably one of the worst nights we've had with fireworks in South Eastmoor. They started before sunset and were still going on at 3:30am this morning. They were happening at different locations, and they were persistent and very loud. Residents did call CPD (Columbus Police Department) general number---basically we were told it was low priority. No surprise there--we know it's going on in many places and there are many other serious crimes committed overnight.

Steps we have taken are calls to CPD, notification to the owner, posts to our social media to encourage reporting and educating folks that it's illegal, reminders that the more calls and reports, the better."

In addition to this email, I have been personally approached by those concerned about their children, pets and residents with medical conditions. By the way did you know it is exceedingly difficult to distinguish between the noise of a firework exploding and those of gunshots?

You want to know what my residents think is promoting the passage of the bill? The last time I testified one state senator said he agreed with all that was presented but because folks were going outside Ohio to purchase fireworks anyway the state was losing money. So, I ask for the people I represent, who is making money from this? The board members, stock owners, your friends, campaign contributors, you?

They are also curious to know if this is happening where you live? Probably not. So, when you go to sleep tonight, and you can hear the crickets outside your window and see only the stars in the sky, think about those of us who aren't so blessed.

Thank you!