Brian Baldridge
State Representative, 90th House District

Chairman Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony for HB 172.

Ohio's fireworks laws have gone largely unchanged for decades, and while consumer grade 1.4G fireworks are currently illegal to use in Ohio, we find every year that this law is largely ignored. By working with the State Fire Marshal's office, and local officials, we can make our state safer while allowing our citizens to express their national pride and joy in a safe and responsible manner through this legislation.

Because safety should rightfully be a consideration, it is important to note that as states across the country have loosened their firework laws, there has not be a statistically significant increase in firework related injuries.

In 1976 the number of fireworks related injuries was approximately 11,100 incidents, and in 2017, that number has only risen to approximately 12,900. The use of illegal "homemade" fireworks and improper use of fireworks has historically been a consistent factor in firework related injuries, and a problem this bill will hope to resolve.

The bill also funds firefighter-training programs by imposing a fee on the retail sale of consumer fireworks. Those fees are credited to firefighter training programs and to the State Fire Marshal's regulation and enforcement of the fireworks industry.

In addition, this bill establishes the Ohio Fire Code Rule Recommendation Committee. This committee will review Ohio's Fireworks law and make recommendations to the State Fire Marshal. The committee is composed of representatives of the fireworks industry, fire officials and health officials.

Again, this legislation is long overdue. House Bill 172 will allow our citizens to enjoy Fourth of July celebrations safely and legally with friends, family and neighbors as 49 other states in this country do. I respectfully ask for your support and am happy to answer any questions.