

PHANTOM FIREWORKS

Distributors of Phantom® and Wolf Pack® Brand Fireworks

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House Commerce and Labor Committee
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215
House Bill 253

Chairwoman Manning, Vice-Chairman Dean, and members of the committee, I am Danial Peart, Director of Government Affairs for Phantom Fireworks. Phantom Fireworks was founded in Youngstown, OH in 1973. In that time, we've expanded into a national presence with retail outlets and offices stretching from California to Maine and Florida. We have significantly grown our Ohio operations over that time, including a 750,000 square foot warehouse in Warren, OH, as well as a new office building that remains in Youngstown. We employ over 400 Ohioans and we are proud to call Ohio our home for the last 46 years. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 253.

While Ohio's consumer fireworks laws have gone largely unchanged for decades, they no longer reflect the current realities of consumer fireworks use. The consumer fireworks industry recognized the importance of bringing a safer, quality, product to market in 1991 when it created the American Fireworks Standards Laboratory and began testing the fireworks at the factory level to their own, stringent, conformity requirements. In that time, CPSC fireworks-related injuries statistics have shown that while fireworks consumption has more than doubled in that time, fireworks-related injuries have decreased by more than 60%. No other industry boasts a safety record that can simultaneously proclaim increased usage and decreased injuries.

Equally as important to fireworks safety is ensuring an educated and informed consumer. Consumer fireworks retailers are spending more time and resources to educate consumers on how fireworks work, and how to use fireworks properly and safely. Our company floods our customers with safety messaging from the moment they walk through our doors until the moment they leave. Experiences in other states have shown that with a focused, educational, message, legalizing consumer fireworks use can serve to decrease consumer injuries. Fireworks safety is our life-blood and we take every available opportunity to impress as much upon our customers.

I'd like to address something that was brought up during sponsor testimony: increasing the retail showroom from the current cap of 5,000 square feet. This is

important for several reasons, but at the top of the list is the matter of public safety. During our busiest times, our showrooms are filled not only with customers and product, but employees that are helping customers and restocking the shelves. Our Ohio showrooms are significantly more crowded with foot traffic than locations in other states during these times. This makes a time-sensitive evacuation more challenging and potentially confusing to customers who are unfamiliar with the layout. Furthermore, no other states where Phantom operates is the size of the retail space statutorily limited. Pennsylvania used to limit square footage, and even then it was set to 12,000 square feet. I hope this answers any questions that may linger from the introductory hearing.

The fireworks advisory group proposed in HB 253 is a practical approach that ensures we don't find ourselves in a similar situation of dealing with antiquated fireworks laws that don't represent real-world scenario. A study group made up of industry, enforcement, and interested parties is a logical means to generate discussion between stakeholders. The ongoing dialogue between industry and enforcement has proven to be effective in multiple states, and leads to a transparency that benefits all involved. We believe this element of HB 253 is a catalyst for success for Ohio's fireworks industry.

Phantom Fireworks enthusiastically supports House Bill 253 and we respectfully urge the committee to do the same. Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Danial Peart, Director of Government Affairs