

## **TESTIMONY OF DAVE BELCHER**

**Retired Fire Department Lieutenant, Fire Service Veteran, Ohio Taxpayer,  
Concerned Citizen**

### **HB 253—Fireworks Legalization and Regulation**

**June 3, 2020**

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Dean, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan and Members of the House Commerce and Labor Committee, thank you for allowing me to speak in opposition of House Bill 253, which would make changes to Ohio's fireworks law.

I served nearly 40 years in the fire service, twelve (12) of those years specifically dealing with enforcing the Ohio Fire Code performing required fire safety inspections.

I am extremely passionate about having the opportunity to participate in the legislative process. Please excuse my absence due to do the current pandemic situation and embrace this written submission as if I were testifying before you today.

My name and title may seem familiar to some of you, as I have followed this legislation for several years. Testifying before (along with other certified fire safety inspector colleagues) as an opponent to any legalization and/or discharge of consumer fireworks. I will defer to the other opponents reference the many injury / safety issues and speak to you as an enforcement official.

This issue and the current legislation before you should be cause for great concern for the safety of all Ohioans. You have heard many opponent testimonies from many different Ohioans. One issue I want to spotlight is, the fact because this current language is so broad, it could tend to cause many issues for fire code officials who are duly sworn to protect our citizens. Quite possibly contradicting current language in both the Ohio Building Code and Ohio Fire Code. Specifically, any availability of consumer fireworks products in mercantile occupancies is not allowed by current code language.

Legislative language (Ohio Revised Code) should not dictate and/or contradict current code language. The normal rule making process should be followed by

relying on the voices of the all the different subject matter experts who have lodged before you many safety concerns.

Also, the fact remains, consumer fireworks are an explosive, dangerous commodity. Many have testified before, with documented evidence as to, there is extraordinarily little quality control going into the manufacturing process. Therefore, the end-product is highly susceptible to varying degrees of explosive elements. Any legalization to the discharge of consumer fireworks is placing many innocent people (most often children - sufficiently documented by others testimony) in harm's way.

Finally, I must express my voice of experience, on the danger that increased access to consumer fireworks and legalized discharge puts in the way of our first responders in law enforcement, emergency care and firefighting. It is the people on the front lines that put themselves in harm's way when there are fires, injuries and disputes that are caused by consumer discharge of fireworks. For the first time in my long career in fire safety I am seeing that fireworks are even being used as weapons against first responders in the violence that is springing up across the country this past week.

I would encourage all of you to reconsider what is at stake by allowing this bill to continue through the legislative process.

Thank you again for allowing my written testimony to be a part of this great American democracy process!