

Testimony as proponent in the matter of SB 113 and changes to the Ohio fireworks laws

March 23, 2021

As co-founder and president emeritus of the Ohio Pyrotechnic Arts Guild and current vice president of communications for the Pyrotechnics Guild International (www.pgi.org), my testimony as a consumer advocate is for safety in the use of fireworks and training of inexperienced citizens in the proper use of both consumer and professional display fireworks. Neither organization is in the business of selling fireworks; we are buyers and display operators.

Both OPAG and PGI have always stressed the importance of safety when handling fireworks, regardless of whether they are consumer 1.4g fireworks or professional display 1.3 fireworks.

The PGI hosts a weeklong convention and sponsors a Junior Pyrotechnic Association. Here youngsters, under the supervision of their parents and safety team members, learn how to safely create a display with consumer fireworks that they then present to the attendant thousands of members and spectators. This course is also offered nationwide and has been adopted by many states as fulfilling a requirement for continuing education.

Are fireworks potentially dangerous? Yes, as are a host of other everyday items — skateboards, bicycles, stoves, grills, the ubiquitous BB gun, etc. It is only by learning and understanding the inherent dangers of everything around us that we can enjoy a quality of life free of most hazards.

The crowds that currently purchase consumer fireworks will undoubtedly incur some injuries due to improper use of products, carelessness, and bad judgment, often on the part of adults. It is only by training and education that we learn to respect all of life's inherent dangers.

Putting our head in the sand and just saying “No, not here in Ohio” will not enhance the safety of Ohio residents, who will continue to purchase and use consumer fireworks, legally or otherwise. The changes and recommendations contained within SB 113 are important first steps on a long overdue process to enhance trade AND safety.

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