

**TESTIMONY OF JON WILLS**  
**SB 113 —Fireworks Legalization and Regulation**  
**June 1, 2021**

Chairman Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee. My name is Jon Wills, and I am Executive Director Emeritus (retired), Ohio Osteopathic Association. I have been a patient, physician, and public health advocate for more than 45 years, and I am testifying today as an interested party to express my opposition to Senate Bill 113. As you know SB 113 allows Ohioans to discharge dangerous consumer grade fireworks in the State of Ohio 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

There is no totally safe way to discharge fireworks in any setting. According to the Ohio Department of Health at least 120 preventable fireworks injuries occur in Ohio each year resulting in visits to emergency rooms. Twenty-five percent of Ohio's fireworks injuries occur to young people under 15 of years of age and nearly half are inflicted on innocent bystanders who are not involved in the discharge. Firework explosions can cause traumatic reactions for an estimated 100,000 Ohio veterans, suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Fireworks also can cause stress and anxiety for our household pets and farm animals; nearly 62 percent of Ohioans are pet owners.

While I am primarily opposed to SB 113 for public safety reasons, this bill also infringes on my rights as a property owner to ensure that my family, grandchildren, pets, and home remain protected from loud noises, potential property damage and personal injuries caused by the potential discharge of consumer grade fireworks in my neighbors' backyards. Irresponsible discharge of commercial grade fireworks – particularly during neighborhood parties where alcohol may be present – create an environment for neighborhood disputes and even more law enforcement dilemmas.

While SB 113 does allow counties, cities, and some townships to either ban fireworks or restrict the times and dates for consumer discharge, the proposed legislation severely limits the ability of local communities to address appropriate safety and fire prevention standards through uniform minimal

standards and a common-sense permitting process particularly in high density population areas. The bill, as currently drafted, also gives the public the false impression that discharge of 1.4G fireworks is safe as long as intended users wear goggles and read a free safety brochure provided by the fireworks vendor. “Buyer Beware” standards do not protect a neighbor’s property and family from potential fireworks harm, period.

Community firework displays in Ohio currently bring people together to celebrate national holidays and other local festivities in a restricted setting managed by professionals. This bill, however, allows no community-based safety provisions and will potentially pit neighbor against neighbor, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days every year. I realize there are many outstanding issues to be resolved with Ohio’s existing fireworks moratorium law – and progress was being made in the last session to find a solution to address the issues I have raised – but SB 113 as currently drafted creates many more new problems than it resolves.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today.