

Dear Distinguished Representatives,

I thank you for the opportunity to present before you here today.

When you gave an oath to serve, you swore to protect the Constitution of Ohio but also to protect the citizens. You serve to protect the citizens from harm both foreign and domestic. Be assured, fireworks are a domestic threat and there is absolutely no need for them. None! By passing this bill you are saying that someone else's right to mindless and dangerous entertainment overrides my personal safety. Passing of this bill would violate everything you swore to uphold and protect.

Laws exist to protect society. We don't allow people to shoot off firearms within city limits. We don't allow individuals to fire a canon whenever they want to. We don't allow people to perform actions that could hurt other individuals. Why? Because everyone has the right to peaceful pursuits: life, liberty and happiness. The only time you don't have the right to pursue *what you wish to do* is when you are taking away someone else's rights and liberties. Fireworks remove that ability for life, liberty and happiness because they are an uncontrollable force.

For the past year and a half, we subdued our liberties because we were told we had to protect the most vulnerable from a virus. Begrudgingly most Ohioans did this because they wanted to protect themselves and other people. If we can put this much effort to protect everyone during times of pandemic why can't we do the same with explosive and dangerous combustibles? And you've heard all the dangers before. Hazardous fires, harm to wildlife, unintended mental damage to those with PTSD, and worst of all possible harm to children. Last year I personally witnessed parents allowing their children to shoot off roman candles in their hands, at cars in the street! Why should I allow my house to be burned down to the ground because of someone else's bad parenting?

Fireworks are a danger to my health and safety of both myself and my family. I have several birds that can easily die if they are shocked. Parrots are extremely susceptible to heart attacks from sudden anxiety. I likewise have extreme anxiety which makes this time of year a maddening hell for me. My family's rights of safety should not be compromised because of someone else's illogical and uneducated form of entertainment. So I ask you, who is going to stand up for my rights to protect my family?

The proponents of this bill indicate that the purpose of this legislation is to push the re-enforcement down to the local level. In short, this is malarkey! Local statues already exist for most counties. In fact, Chapter 2533 of Columbus code already prohibits the buying and handling of fireworks. Columbus Police neither have the manpower, nor the ability to re-enforce safety during the July 4th season. Passage of this bill will send the wrong signal to residents that they would have the ability to misbehave when they legally don't, and put more of us in danger, already strapping our existing first responder services.

This small part of the bill that removes the ban on consumer discharge of fireworks needs to go away. What we need is more protection from those who would do us and others harm for their bad choices. We need effective means to curtail these bad behaviors during this time of year not an incentive to fund an industry based on bodily harm.

To quote one of my favorite movies, “The needs of the one, outweigh the needs of the many.” You my distinguished Representatives are here to protect the ones, the few who need that protection. These are our very Veterans who we just celebrated a few weeks ago for their sacrifice. Either you are here to protect us and serve your constituents, or your purpose is compromised.

HOWEVER, I believe most of you ARE here to serve and protect just like our Veterans. You heard the call of duty and wanted to our make lives better for us in this great state of Ohio. You have a choice to move us forward to a safer, more just society. I implore you to at best vote DOWN Substitute House Bill 172 or at least amend the section on consumer discharge to retain the decades-long ban.

Lastly, during the Senate hearing on this bill, one of the Senators said he was supporting this because he was concerned of the money going out of state. Once again this is inaccurate. Consumer grade fireworks are sold in Ohio at 56 retail locations open 365 days/year. Discharge is banned, but sales are completely open. So I’m going to quote another famous line from another movie. “How many people have to be hurt before it becomes cost effective for you to do something about?” The movie was ‘And The Band Played On’ and it was about the AIDS epidemic. I believe if you pass this bill you will be continuing another epidemic of pain and suffering when you have the power to stop it right here, right now.

I implore you to defend those of us who cannot defend ourselves, those of us who suffer this time of year because of the inconsideration of others. We deserve a safer Ohio, we deserve a better Ohio and I ask you to keep that in mind today. I ask you to remember your Oath.

Thank you for your time,

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