



Sponsor Testimony

State Representative Brian Baldrige

House Bill 304

Chair Hoagland, Vice-Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee thank you for the opportunity to stand before you today to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 304. This legislation revises current state statute by requiring under certain circumstances that existing smoke detectors be replaced with a sealed battery smoke detector, and that the State Fire Marshal shall adopt rules that include the new requirements. Once enacted this legislation will save multi-family owners money, and more importantly save lives.

Data from the National Fire Prevention Association shows that three of every five fire deaths occur in residences with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms. From 2009 to 2013 smoke alarms sounded in over 53% of home fires reported to U.S. fire departments, no smoke alarms were present in 38% of residential fire deaths, and 21% of the residential fire deaths, smoke alarms were present but did not sound. Power source issues are the leading reasons why alarms fail to operate with nearly 70% of alarms failing to sound due to batteries that were missing, disconnected or discharged. We need to act to save lives.

As both a volunteer and a professional firefighter/paramedic for over 32 years, I have seen firsthand that smoke detectors save lives. Unfortunately, I have also seen firsthand the consequences of when a detector is improperly maintained, tampered with, or removed. Too many times after a fire I have looked up and seen an open detector with no battery, and sometimes there are no injuries or deaths, but sometimes there are. This bill is about safety, and putting a stop to preventable tragedies. Additionally, this bill brings Ohio up to date with the latest smoke detection technology, which removes the semi-annual need to replace a battery, which is all too often forgotten or disregarded. This bill also removes the temptation of someone removing the battery and placing it in a TV remote or other device.

Current advancements in technology have led to the creation of these smoke alarms that prevent tampering, and can power an alarm for a minimum of 10 years. These 10-year, tamper resistant smoke alarms directly address the disablement and failed operation by consumers, and do so in a cost efficient way. The average cost of a 10 year, temper resistant alarm costs roughly \$5 more than a traditional battery operated alarm, however since the battery does not need to be replaced twice a year, consumers can save between \$40-\$60 in



battery replacement costs over the life of the alarm. House Bill 304 is cost-effective, efficient, and potentially live saving.

House Bill 304 stipulates that existing smoke detectors that do not receive power primarily from their building's wiring, and that are permitted in occupancies to meet the state fire code requirements shall be replaced with seal battery smoke detectors when any of the following occurs:

1. Ten years passes after a smoke detector's date of manufacture, or when a smoke detector malfunctions or fails to respond to function tests.
2. Ownership of owner-occupied residential premises changes, and sealed battery smoke detectors that are within ten years of their date of manufacture are not already installed.
3. A new tenant takes possession of a new rental pursuant to a rental agreement, and sealed battery smoke detectors that are within ten years of their date of manufacture are not already installed
4. Alterations or repairs requiring plan approval are made, and smoke detectors that receive power primarily from the building's wiring are not required as a result of those alterations or repairs.

Over 14 states have passed 10 year smoke alarm laws, and over a dozen cities, including Columbus and Cleveland. States that have passed such laws have seen dramatic decreases in home fire fatalities in the immediate years after their laws took effect. The National Association of State Fire Marshalls, National Fire Prevention Association, the Red Cross, and several other fire and life safety organizations all recommend the use of these alarms. Let's make the best decision for the safety of our constituents, because smoke detectors do save lives.

Chair Hoagland, Vice-Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to stand before you today and I would be happy to answer any questions.