

TESTIMONY OF JOE POSEY

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HB 172 —Fireworks Legalization and Regulation

April 21, 2021

Chairman Stein, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan, and Members of the Commerce and Labor Committee, thank you for allowing us to express our opposition of House Bill 172, which would allow consumers in Ohio to use bottle rockets, firecrackers, ground sparklers and missiles (1.4g explosive fireworks).

I have proudly served Ohio's Fire Service for nearly 30 years serving in a number of roles with just under ten (10) years enforcing the Ohio Fire Code in a busy suburban/urban Department. I have had the pleasure and honor to work with and learn from some of the best in their various areas of expertise while being absolutely selfless first responders.

One thing that I have learned in my interactions with people from all walks of life under all types of situations, from a chance encounter to disastrous emergency scene is that our beliefs and unique point of view is distinctly shaped by our individual life experiences. I have found that no matter how different ones views maybe from another that if we had similar life experiences many of us would make a similar choice or have a similar view. In simpler terms, if we could really walk a mile in another's shoes. Even if you do not believe in my point of view, I implore you to please consider my life experiences over the last 30 years serving as a Firefighter, a Paramedic, a Lieutenant, a Fire Inspector, a Fire Investigator, a Deputy Sheriff, a Tactical Medic and a Code Enforcement Officer.

It is because of my life experiences and the tragedies that I have responded to over the last 30 years that I believe I have a duty and a responsibility to all Ohioans to educate you of the grave consequences that the choices of today may hold for those that follow us. When we as Firefighters respond to a structure fire and rescue a family of 4 from a burning building we can quantify those results. But as a Fire Inspector and/or legislator, it is not possible to quantify our success as the impact of our choices today can and will save countless lives tomorrow.

Across our Great Nation First Responders have been stretched to the breaking point fighting the current pandemic and now as a result of that pandemic many Departments are facing layoffs of a significant number of essential Police, Fire and EMS personnel. As a direct result many departments will reduce or even eliminate their already overworked and understaffed Fire Inspection Bureaus.

On top of the Pandemic, violence has erupted everywhere and our First-Responders have been doing everything they can to protect us all and keep us all safe. As we journeyed here today I am sure all of us are saddened by the destruction we saw outside these walls and with the smell of smoke still in the air from so many fires. I find it is with a heavy heart and great dismay that I am testifying before you on sweeping changes to consumer grade fireworks that have proven to be dangerous and have had tragic results with the loss of many innocent lives when the very fireworks we are discussing are being used as weapons against those willing to put their lives on the lines for us as we speak. I believe many of our first responders would like and deserve a voice on a bill of this magnitude but are currently overwhelmed and unable to be here with us today.

As I mentioned, that while our successes as fire inspectors and legislators cannot be quantified history has proven that our failures in these roles of great responsibility can be measured and in many times with great loss of life. I truly believe the current legislation before you today is cause of great concern to the Safety of All Ohioans for many generations to come. I urge you to reconsider what is at stake.

Thank-you all very much for your time and your consideration of my testimony, it is truly an honor to be part of the great American Legislative Process!