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Saving, protecting and enhancing children's lives

June 22nd, 2021

The Honorable Dick Stein
Chair, Commerce and Labor Committee
Ohio House of Representatives
Ohio Statehouse
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Chairman Stein and Members of the Ohio House Commerce and Labor Committee—

On behalf of the Ohio Fireworks Safety Coalition, a statewide organization with more than fifty members, we are writing today to express our concerns with Senate Bill 113. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to share these comments and are grateful for your time and attention to this issue.

As you know, SB 113 would allow for fireworks discharge in the state of Ohio. This legislation is similar to House Bill 172, which passed this committee in April. One important difference is SB 113 limits the days that discharge can occur to specified holidays throughout the year. While this is an improvement, **we remain concerned over any legalization of fireworks discharge in the Buckeye State.**

Further, while local governments can prohibit discharge within their boundaries, they are limited on adopting other safeguards or protocols for discharge. SB 113 also includes several changes related to fireworks industry regulation that we are not concerned with. The exception is language allowing ground-based fountain devices, sometimes called 'ground sparklers,' to be sold in traditional retail settings. This seems to conflict with federal classifications for consumer grade (1.4g) fireworks.

Historically, our coalition has fought successfully to protect Ohio's prohibition on discharge. **Our concerns are straightforward: legalization of discharge will lead to an increase in fireworks-related injuries, property damage, and fatalities.** Fireworks are inherently dangerous, and a statewide prohibition sends a clear message to Ohioans regarding these dangers. Like speed limits and distracted driving, we know that some Ohioans disregard the law and discharge fireworks anyway. This is unfortunate as it puts everyone nearby at risk.

We encourage the committee to consider changes to the bill that would expand local government powers related to regulating discharge, **including allowing local governments to 'opt-in' to allowing discharge as opposed to the current 'opt-out' structure in SB 113. A similar change was made to House Bill 253 in the prior General Assembly and that resulted in our coalition being neutral on the bill.** There is still time to find a middle ground and compromise on this issue and we look forward to continued participation in this process.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and dedication to the health and safety of all Ohioans.

Submitted on behalf of—

Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

Prevent Blindness Ohio

Ohio Academy of Family Physicians

Ohio Chapter, American College of Emergency Physicians

Ohio Insurance Institute

Ohio Ophthalmological Society

Ohio State Medical Association

Ohio Osteopathic Association

Academy of Medicine of Cleveland and Northern Ohio