

SB 1055

Testimony of PA Fire and Emergency Services Institute

Good morning Chairman Vogel and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Donald Konkle. I am the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Fire and Emergency Service Institute and the Law and Legislative Chair of the Fireman's Association of the State of Pennsylvania. I have been involved in the fire service since 1967, including 37 years as a member of the Harrisburg Bureau of Fire; 27 of those years as Chief

The Pennsylvania Fire and Emergency Services Institute, The PA Career Fire Chiefs, The PA Legislative Federation, The Fireman's Association of the State of Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvanian Emergency Health Services Council, PA Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Burn Prevention Network American Burn Association, and numerous County Fire and EMS organizations join us in opposing SB 1055.

Pennsylvania already has the least restrictive fireworks laws of any of our neighboring states. Delaware and New Jersey ban fireworks sales entirely Maryland, New York and Ohio have more restrictive laws than Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania is also unique among our neighboring states in permitting sales of consumer fireworks to out of state residents. Expansion of that exception to allow Pennsylvania consumers to purchase consumer fireworks would serve only to increase the number of injuries and fires caused by fireworks.

Put simply, fireworks are dangerous and their use should not be expanded. In 2011, an estimated 17,800 reported fires were started by fireworks. These fires resulted in an estimated \$32 million in direct property damage.

Every year, we are reminded of the hazards that novelty and small fireworks pose. The weeks around the Fourth of July holiday are filled with news stories of injuries and in some instances, fatalities from the use of these types of fireworks.

According to a special study conducted by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), there were 11,400 individuals attended by emergency room physicians in 2013 for injuries resulting from the use of novelty fireworks, with 65% of those being treated during a one-month period between June 21 and July 21, 2013. Of the 11,400 injuries, 40% were children under the age of 15.

A serious burn injury cost \$500,000 to \$2 million in hospital, medical and rehab costs.

While increased funding for emergency service personnel and firefighters is needed, it should not be at the expense of people's health and safety. SB 1055 proposes a new excise tax on fireworks sales to help fund necessary training for EMS and firefighters.

Despite this proposal, as the potential recipients of these funds, we strongly urge you to oppose this legislation.

Firefighters that an oath to protect the public we serve. We take that oath very seriously and fell the it requires us to oppose SB 1099

We greatly appreciate your continuing support for firefighters and emergency services providers, and would be happy to meet with you and discuss our concerns further.