

**Testimony by the Pennsylvania Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
to the Pennsylvania House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee
Re: HB 1687
September 24, 2019**

Chairman Causer, Chairman Pashinski, member of the Committee, on behalf of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (PA-AAP), I write today to urge your support for HB 1687. To be honest, PA-AAP would prefer that you act to repeal the tax legislation that allowed sales of consumer fireworks in the first place, in order to fulfill government's foremost responsibility of protecting the health and safety of its citizens.

However, knowing that's not a likely scenario, we believe that the General Assembly and state government should do their utmost to protect its firefighters, police officers, and innocent bystanders of all ages, who become victims of other's carelessness.

We also wish to acknowledge the prime sponsor of this legislation, Rep. Frank Farry, and the 28 bipartisan cosponsors of this legislation.

The issue of expanded sales of consumer fireworks has been important to the PA-AAP. For several years, we opposed the expansion of sales to include consumer fireworks, which were only approved when language was slipped into the state's Tax Code in 2017, legalizing purchases of consumer fireworks by Pennsylvanians and levying a 12% tax on all fireworks sales. The act made a huge policy change, repealing the state's law prohibiting the purchase and use of consumer fireworks (aerial rockets and missiles, fountains, firecrackers, and Roman candles) after supporters failed to get legislation on the subject passed.

Our reasons for seeking the provisions of HB 1687 in regulating fireworks in Pennsylvania come from experience.

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, in 2018, Fireworks were involved in an estimated 9,100 injuries treated in U.S. hospital emergency departments during calendar year

2018 (95 percent confidence interval 7,000–11,100). The estimated rate of emergency department-treated injuries is 2.8 per 100,000 individuals in the United States.

An estimated 5,600 fireworks-related injuries (or 62 percent of the total estimated fireworks-related injuries in 2018) were treated in U.S. hospital emergency departments during the 1-month special study period between June 22, 2018 and July 22, 2018 (95 percent confidence interval 3,900–7,200).

Ultimately, a reality is that the actual number of fireworks-related injuries is significantly under-reported. Available statistics reflect emergency room visits, and do not capture injuries which are treated by primary care physicians after the fact, by other professionals, or at home.

Children and young adults suffer a disproportionate share of these injuries. Children younger than 15 years of age accounted for 36 percent of the estimated injuries. Similar to the last ten years of data, nearly half (48%) of the estimated emergency department treated fireworks-related injuries were to individuals younger than 20 years of age. Children 10 to 14 years of age had the highest estimated rate of emergency department-treated, fireworks-related injuries (5.2 injuries per 100,000 people). Older teens, 15 to 19 years of age, had the second highest estimated rate (3.1 injuries per 100,000 people).

We have been unable to locate any Pennsylvania specific data, or any agency in Pennsylvania government charged with tracking and reporting on these and similar types of injuries – I ask that you please consider incorporating such a system in any final deliberations.

As for HB 1687 itself, we consider the bill a positive step in helping protect the health and safety of the public with commonsense recommendations from the fire, police and emergency responder communities and urge its passage.

Recognizing the huge proportion of injuries to those 19 and under, we strongly support the prohibition against anyone 18 years of age purchasing, possessing or using consumer fireworks. Simply put, this legislation moves toward steps that surely would have been considered if the

expansion had taken place in the traditional legislative process of passing a one subject bill, rather than being tucked into the omnibus tax reform code bill.

We urge you to favorably report HB 1687 from Committee, and if possible, to strengthen its requirements to ensure future state actions regarding fireworks can rely on state level data.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony, and for your consideration of our concerns over the sales and use of consumer fireworks.

Annette G. Myarick, Executive Director
Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
1400 N. Providence Road, Bldg. 2, Suite 4000
Media, PA 19063

Phone: 484-446-3042

Email: amyarick@paaap.org