

State Representative Frank Farry's

HB 2031 Testimony

1/31/12

Good Morning.

I would like to begin by thanking Chairmans Godshall and Preston as well as my fellow members of the Committee for scheduling and attending this hearing. I would also like to thank Middletown Township for providing us the facilities.

The matter at hand that is before this Committee is a public safety issue that has a very simple and low cost solution. As you will hear from the testifiers CO in the silent killer. You will also hear that this colorless, odorless gas has had devastating consequences on residents of this Commonwealth.

Several decades ago public officials, citizen advocates and the fire service brought to light the need to require smoke detectors in dwellings. The hard work of those advocating to require detectors paid off and I think you will agree with me that hundreds if not thousands of lives have been saved in the Commonwealth as a result of the early warning of smoke detectors. However, one significant difference exists between the dangers that smoke detectors alert you to and that of CO detectors; your senses. You can see smoke and fire, you can hear the crackling, you can taste it in the air, you can smell it and you can feel the heat. None of your five senses can detect CO.

Lives are being lost and people are being sickened where preventable measures exist. Pennsylvania leads the nation in CO poisonings. The Carbon Monoxide Health and Safety Association conducted a nationwide study in 2005 that showed CO poisonings and deaths cost \$8.8 billion annually in lost productivity and health care costs. They estimate that if every home had two CO alarms that cost would be cut by 93%.

Since September 2011, 146 Pennsylvanians' have been poisoned by CO to the degree that it either caused illness or was fatal. In my role as Fire Chief of this community we recently responded to a CO alarm dispatch. Initial crews found CO readings that were at levels that would have most likely been fatal over the course of the night to the dwelling's residents.

When Senator Browne introduced HB 2031's companion legislation, SB 920, we heard concerns raised by the Realtors. We worked with them to develop the language that is HB 2031, which provides the necessary level of protection for our residents while not unduly burdening the group's members.

Today you will hear the testimony of Commissioner Ayers regarding the success of Philadelphia's ordinance in greatly reducing the poisonings related to CO. Contrarily, we will hear from Chief Huff of the devastating consequences that Upper Darby has faced as a result of the CO. Likewise, testimony was submitted by Bucks County resident Mary Smithson regarding the impact CO has had on her family with the loss of her aunt and uncle in Beaver County in a preventable CO incident.

The solution is simple and inexpensive. If you placed 2 CO detectors in your home at a total cost of \$60 and with a useful life of 7 years you will have spent less than \$10 a year to ensure the safety of you and your family. It is a very small price to pay compared with the consequences. Please join me in trying to ensure that PA joins the over 30 other states that have a similar law and let's ensure that our residents have the protection they need from this proven killer.

Thank you.