

House Bill 2031

Testimony presented by Mary K. Smithson, Resident of Bucks County Pa.

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Good Morning:

My name is Mary K. Smithson and I reside in Washington's Crossing, Bucks County Pa. I would like to express my sincerest appreciation to the Honorable Frank Farry for giving me an opportunity to submit testimony to this committee on House Bill 2031. I am an elected official in Bucks County and have served the citizens of Bucks County as Clerk of the Courts of the Court of Common Pleas since 1996.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is a deadly gas which contains no color, no taste or odor and is extremely difficult to detect. The effects of carbon monoxide poisoning can be extremely severe and in some cases fatal.

I have had a personal experience, as my Aunt and Uncle Dave and Jean Householder from Beaver County Pa. were overcome by this silent killer while in a nursing facility in Beaver County which is fully accredited by the Department of Welfare. This occurrence happened on February 21, 2007 almost 5 years ago. High levels of carbon monoxide were found in their system while they slept. Both of them suffered heart attacks, loss of fine motor skills, confusion, Parkinson like systems. Two weeks later, my Uncle Dave died and 7 days later my Aunt Jean passed away from the devastating effects of carbon monoxide poisoning. No carbon monoxide detector was installed at the nursing facility until after this tragedy occurred, since the installation of carbon monoxide detectors is not mandatory under Pennsylvania law.

This proposed legislation address the issue of existing multifamily dwellings and the requirement that new homeowners upon sale of their home be required to equip the home with a carbon monoxide detector. This device which is relatively inexpensive are either battery or AC powered/ with or without battery backup. The cost of a detector which I have priced @ True Hardware is less than \$20.00 (Twenty Dollars). Carbon monoxide detectors are just as important to home and public safety as smoke detectors, and I can think of no reason why their installation should not be required by law.

Although Buck County had five (5) deaths in 2010 and two (2) deaths in 2011 from carbon-monoxide poisoning tragedies which could have been prevented with the presence of carbon monoxide detectors.

Pennsylvania has the second largest population of World War II veterans and baby boomers in the nation, many of whom now live in assisted living and nursing facilities, none of which are now required by law to have carbon monoxide detectors installed.

I implore the members of this committee to not only bring this Bill out of committee but to add the requirement that all nursing facilities regulated by the Department of Welfare be mandated to have carbon monoxide detectors installed as a condition of maintaining their license. Doing so can avoid tragic deaths from carbon monoxide poisoning as suffered by my aunt and uncle, and many, many others.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary K. Smithson

January 31, 2012