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To The Pennsylvania Senate and House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committees

VIA EMAIL

Dear Committee Members:

Stop Philly Fireworks was formed out of mutual desperation. From across the City of Philadelphia, previously unconnected people found each other as they endured night after night of random explosions. Some knew who was setting them off but were afraid to confront them based on past experience. Others asked nicely to stop, explaining the harm and that it was not legal to use them in such close quarters; they often faced retribution. Others could only hear incessant booms, unable to be sure from where they came.

You will hear about people with PTSD, pets who have even died from the nightly trauma, workers who cannot rest during a pandemic, the danger of fire and maiming, fireworks used as weapons on the streets, and all the other valid reasons for the repeal of Act 43. But I want to discuss what has become my greatest concern after two years of meeting people across the City and even the State: the despair caused by the relentless assault without any hope of help.

We hear frighteningly loud explosions that no one believes are “legal” fireworks but get lumped into the non-enforcement. Calls for police are rarely answered. Citizens watch dangerously illegal use: setting fireworks off in playgrounds with young children clustered around, fired across streets, fired at 11:30 at night on a playground under a flight path, fired over Roosevelt Boulevard – unsafe enough on its own. People are mocked on social media for thinking they are hearing gunshots – and then men died while no one called the police because they thought the gun shots were fireworks.

Other places have seen people killed because they complained about fireworks or because they refused to stop after throwing them outside of apartments for hours. Constant noise and disruption breeds nothing good; people have breaking points. This schizophrenic law – legalizing purchase and possession while winking at the situations where they should never be used – isolates law-abiding citizens while empowering law-breaking bullies.

There is no social good achieved by allowing the sale of these dangerous items. No user can practice their hobby without knowingly disturbing, in many cases deeply, their neighbors for a mile or more. Nowhere in Philadelphia should we have to hear their hobby at 2 a.m. or for hours on end.

The problem is insidious with money at the root: Profits for fireworks companies, taxes for government. It is caused and exacerbated by the State law and law-abiding taxpayers need you to save us. This is not trivial; it is not partisan; it is not unfixable: Repeal Act 43, set up serious penalties, reward enforcement.

There is no legal place to use them in the City yet, despite City and State laws against their use, they plainly cannot be stopped while they are legal to buy in the State; they cannot be confiscated, and there is no means of ensuring how they are transported or stored. The only help with this problem must come from the legislators who saddled us with this menace. You have many challenges that are all but impossible to solve. Fireworks is NOT one of them.

As a coordinator for both SPF and Pennsylvania Communities Against Fireworks, I am happy to discuss this with you. You can reach me at (215) 852-2154 or Stop_Philly_Fireworks@yahoo.com. Please be supportive of a safer and quieter Philadelphia!

Sincerely,

Maureen McDevitt Greene