



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

March 5, 2024

Bill: HB 1443 – Consumer and Display Fireworks – Regulation and Tax
Committee: House Economic Matters
Position: OPPOSE

Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Members of the House Economic Matters Committee:

On behalf of our Maryland members, supporters and volunteers, the Humane Society of the United States strongly opposes HB 1443, which creates a new definition of “consumer” fireworks that does not require a permit for use by a person at least 18 years of age. This measure could drastically increase the noise and disturbance created by fireworks, with potentially harmful or even disastrous results for Maryland’s pets and wildlife. Animals—both wild and domestic—are sensitive to loud noises, flashing lights and strong smells, and can suffer from severe anxiety and fear during fireworks displays.

Indoor-only pets can become so frightened during fireworks displays that they may take desperate measures to escape the noise, including breaking through windows or door screens, and sadly become lost. Horses may also suffer devastating or even fatal health effects from the stress created by fireworks displays.

The sudden bright flashes and sounds of fireworks can cause wild animals to run into roadways, resulting in more car accidents than normal. Wildlife rehabilitation centers are often flooded with traumatized, injured and orphaned wild animals after holidays that feature fireworks displays.¹ Predatory birds, like bald eagles, see the harsh sounds and lights from fireworks as a threat, and may abandon their nests or habitats entirely.² The explosions may cause other birds to take off *en masse* for prolonged periods of time and to use up vital energy reserves needed for survival.³ Fireworks have even frightened birds into flying so far out to sea that they did not have the energy to make the return flight.⁴ Wild birds frightened by the noise of fireworks will also fly higher and for longer, which exposes them to the harmful cocktail of ingredients in fireworks like ozone, sulfur dioxide and nitric oxide that have caused cardiovascular and respiratory damage, and even death, in humans.⁵

Casings and heavy metals that are littered by fireworks are often mistakenly consumed by wildlife or even fed to their young. Many of these materials are either indigestible and therefore choking hazards, or toxic to the animal, and pollutants from fireworks can be washed into waterways and contaminate drinking water for the animals that rely on it. And in areas prone to wildfires, the slightest ember from a fireworks display can start a blaze that kills many wildlife species and destroys their habitats.

Rather than making it easier to use fireworks in Maryland, we should instead encourage celebrations that use safer, more animal-friendly alternatives like “silent” or “quiet” fireworks, laser shows and drone displays.⁶

Will all of this in mind, the HSUS respectfully urges the committee to reject HB 1143. Thank you for your consideration.

Jennifer Bevan-Dangel
Maryland State Director
jbevandangel@humanesociety.org



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

¹ Morrow, Alison. “Fireworks cause wildlife rehab centers to fill up.” KING5, June 27, 2017.

<https://www.king5.com/article/tech/science/environment/fireworks-cause-wildlife-rehab-centers-to-fill-up/281-452312933>

² U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: “Keeping wildlife safe on Independence Day.”

<https://www.fws.gov/story/keeping-wildlife-safe-independence-day>

³ Shamoun-Baranes, J., Dokter, A. M., van Gasteren, H., van Loon, E. E., Leijnse, H., & Bouten, W. (2011).

Birds flee en mass from New Year’s Eve fireworks. *Behavioral ecology: official journal of the International Society for Behavioral Ecology*, 22(6), 1173–1177. <https://doi.org/10.1093/beheco/arr102>

⁴ Yates, Diana. “How do July 4 celebrations affect wildlife?” The University of Illinois News Bureau, June 30, 2021. <https://news.illinois.edu/view/6367/437774847>

⁵ “How Do Fireworks Harm Wild Birds?” *Forbes*, Dec. 30, 2017 at

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/grrlscientist/2017/12/30/how-do-fireworks-harm-wild-birds/>

⁶ Desmond, Jane. “It’s time for silent fireworks.” *The Hill*, Jun. 29, 2020 <https://thehill.com/opinion/energy-environment/504964-its-time-for-silent-fireworks/>;

Yin, Steph. “Quiet Fireworks’ Promise Relief for Children and Animals.” *The New York Times*, Jun. 30, 2016.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/01/science/july-4-fireworks-quiet.html>; Guttman, Chase. “Drone Light Shows Bring Eco-friendly Alternative to Fireworks.” *The Forecast by Nutanix*. June 10, 2021

<https://www.nutanix.com/theforecastbynutanix/technology/drone-light-shows-bring-eco-friendly-alternative-to-fireworks/>; International Olympic Committee: “Spectacular Intel Drone Light Show helps bring Tokyo 2020 to life.” July 23, 2021 <https://olympics.com/ioc/news/spectacular-intel-drone-light-show-helps-bring-tokyo-2020-to-life-1>.