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HB 1502

I hope the committee members give an unfavorable decision on HB 1502.

Fireworks are dangerous and should remain banned for use by consumers in Maryland. I have been adversely affected personally by fireworks and, as a board-certified psychiatrist, can attest to the harm fireworks cause individuals with PTSD.

On October 15, 2021, fireworks were set off to celebrate the Hindu New Year at a facility next to the barn where I boarded my beloved thoroughbred horse Adam. It was a warm night, so the horses were far out in a field — probably a football field away from the Hindu facility. When the fireworks were set off, it frightened the horses and initiated a stampede. Adam sustained a compound fracture of his left rear leg. He suffered in extreme pain the entire night until the injury was discovered the next morning. He was in shock from the loss of blood, which was in puddles as he tried to ambulate toward the gate on three legs. The farm veterinarian came immediately when contacted, but the injury was so severe the horse had to be euthanized.

This was heartbreaking and entirely preventable. The Hindus put a video of the fireworks on Facebook, so I know exactly when this nightmare occurred. Had they informed the horse farm owner, the horses would have been kept in their stalls for the night. But even then, the horses likely would have had a stress reaction and could have injured themselves in their stalls.

Fortunately, Adam was the only horse injured, but many other horses could have been harmed. Someone from the fire department visited the Hindu compound, explained that what they did was illegal and confiscated unused fireworks. Despite this episode, they set fireworks off again in October 2025 — and again without warning — but this time the horse farm owner intervened in time, before there was another injury to a horse.

This kind of problem occurs despite current laws restricting fireworks. Laws allowing consumers to set off fireworks means more consumers will use them, making the threat to horses far worse! It's not just the sight of fireworks that frighten horses, it's the sound and the smell, both of which can travel much further than 300 feet!

Please consider too that horses are not the only animal petrified by fireworks. Dogs are extremely sensitive to loud noises and often go “crazy” when they hear fireworks. One of my own dogs

became frightened and agitated when fireworks were set off in the neighborhood. The panic lasted for hours.

In my psychiatric practice, I have treated many individuals — particularly veterans — with PTSD who are terrorized by fireworks because the sound and bright flashes of light resemble gunfire or explosions.

A PTSP episode is characterized by intense reactions to trauma triggers with sudden flashbacks (reliving the traumatic event), nightmares, panic attacks and extreme irritability or emotional numbness. These episodes are often associated physical symptoms such as shaking, sweating, heart racing and feeling jumpy (hypervigilance). The symptoms can last for months or even years and cause considerable misery for sufferers.

It is my strong personal and professional opinion that HB 1502 be rejected.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

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