

My name is Gina Miller and I am submitting this testimony as a Carroll County citizen. I oppose HB 1502, the "Consumer and Display Fireworks" bill.

This proposes to allow fireworks at 150 feet from a barn. As a horse owner, this is a disaster for me. Horses are panicked by fireworks. They will run blindly. That is a stampede. It is truly terrifying to try to control 1200 pound animals that are running full speed in panic mode. There is a reason for all those cowboy songs about terrible stampedes.

I have an ongoing fireworks problem in my neighborhood as it is. A neighbor about one half mile away does a huge fireworks display every 4th of July. This panics my horses terribly. How do I deal with it now? On the morning of the 4th of July, I give them a first dose of sedative. Before dark, I bring them in and give them a second dose of sedative. I lock them in their stalls and close up the barn, run fans and play music so as to drown out the outside sounds. I have a third dose of sedative ready. When the fireworks really start, they will panic in their stalls. If I stay close and comfort them and feed them treats, they will stay safely in the stalls. I stay with the horses until all the fireworks are over, usually after midnight. This is always my 4th of July. It is totally my least favorite holiday.

The fireworks my neighbor sets off are huge. They rival what the fireman's carnival does. This puts me in a terrible bind. Do I call the police and turn in the neighbor? We all need to depend on each other, so I need to stay on good terms. This neighbor is a very nice person, and he apologizes that our horses panic but he is still setting off the fireworks. It is important to him to impress and entertain his social circle. He spends many thousands on this fireworks display. All the non-livestock owning neighbors love the fireworks. So I'm stuck going along to get along. This situation dictates that I spend every 4th of July protecting my animals and just praying it is enough to keep my animal family safe.

The first year of these fireworks, I was not prepared and my horses stampeded in a panic. I was in a dangerous situation trying to control the horses. I was lucky, no harm came. But what if they had gone through the fence? They could have caused a traffic accident killing themselves or the people in the cars. They could have injured themselves, meaning thousands of dollars of vet bills. Would my neighbor pay for this? Does anyone take this into account? Can we mandate that there be insurance for such incidents? Even if there was insurance compensation, it doesn't really make it right. These equines are partners and family members with value beyond money. If they are injured, not only are there vet bills, there will be many hours of care required to allow them to recover from injuries.

Already no one is obeying the current laws about fireworks. Passing something loosening those laws only sends the message that its ok to set off anything that people can get their hands on. This leaves farmers with cattle or horse-owners with equines all the responsibility to protect their animals. This close limit of 150 feet is terrifying for this situation. Just one more thing that makes it hard to be a farmer. People love moving to the country. They want it to stay country because it looks nice for them. But they don't want to be burdened with any of the responsibility or limits that it takes to support farmers.

I oppose this bill.