



House Bill 7054

AN ACT CONCERNING THE SALE AND USE OF NONAERIAL AND NONEXPLOSIVE CONSUMER FIREWORKS AND SKY LANTERNS

Testimony of the Department of Administrative Services

Public Safety and Security Committee

February 27, 2025

Senator Gaston, Representative Boyd, Senator Cicarella, Representative Howard, and distinguished Public Safety and Security Committee members. I am Michelle Gilman, Commissioner of the Department of Administrative Services (DAS), and I am joined today by State Fire Marshal Lauri Volkert. We thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to **House Bill 7054: An Act Concerning the Sale and Use of Nonaerial and Nonexplosive Consumer Fireworks and Sky Lanterns**.

House Bill 7054 authorizes the sale and use by consumers of nonaerial and nonexplosive fireworks and sky lanterns to anyone eighteen years or older. While we support increasing the age from sixteen to eighteen on who can sell, purchase or use these items, we oppose the addition of nonaerial and nonexplosive fireworks and sky lanterns to what is legal in the State of Connecticut.

Fireworks are commonly used to mark special events and holidays. Still, it's crucial to understand that the only safe way to enjoy fireworks is by attending a professional show, as consumer fireworks pose significant safety risks.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), more than 31,000 fires are started by fireworks annually. In 2022, this included 3,504 structure fires, 887 vehicle fires, 26,492 outside fires, and 418 unclassified fires. These fires led to six civilian deaths, 44 civilian injuries, and \$109 million in direct property damage. NFPA noted that, unfortunately, the incidence of fires linked to fireworks is on the rise.

In 2022, U.S. hospital emergency rooms treated an estimated 10,200 people for fireworks-related injuries. Over half of these injuries were to the extremities: 29% were to the hands and fingers, 19% to the legs, and 5% to the arms. Additionally, 35% of injuries were to the eyes or other parts of the head. Alarmingly, children under 15 accounted for 28% of these injuries. These estimates are derived from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's (CPSC) 2022 Fireworks Annual Report.

Some may argue that consumer fireworks are "safe," but consider that there were an estimated 1,300 emergency department-treated injuries from firecrackers and 600 from sparklers alone, according to the CPSC.

Furthermore, a report from the CPSC found that approximately 43% of selected and tested consumer fireworks products were non-compliant. These non-compliant devices had an estimated import value of \$443,000 and were found to have dangerous violations such as fuse problems, prohibited chemicals, burnout or blowout issues, and pyrotechnic material overload. The report noted that this percentage of non-compliant products was notably higher than in previous years, highlighting an increasing safety concern.

Any expansion of the use and sale of consumer fireworks would be a disservice to public safety and fire prevention in our state.

The dangers are not limited to fireworks alone. NFPA code, adopted into the Connecticut State Fire Prevention Code, prohibits sky lanterns, made from oiled rice paper with bamboo frames, due to their fire hazard. These devices are lit with a candle or wax fuel cell, and once airborne, they can travel more than a mile. Wind can destabilize the lantern, causing it to fall back to the ground while still alight, leading to potential fires in dry conditions. Sky lanterns have ignited brush, structures, and powerlines, resulting in destructive fires.

But the dangers do not stop there. The debris from sky lanterns can harm wildlife and livestock and pollute waterways, creating additional environmental risks.

According to the National Park Service, nearly 85% of wildland fires in the United States are caused by human activity. These human-caused fires result from unattended campfires, burning debris, equipment malfunctions, discarded cigarettes, and intentional acts of arson.

Considering the State's recent experience with extreme fire danger and the increasing wildfire risk nationwide, we should align with the 28 other states that have banned the use and sale of sky lanterns. Opposing this bill is in the best interest of public safety, environmental protection, and fire prevention.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and share our thoughts with the Committee.