



Legislative Testimony

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Written Testimony on Senate Bill 132, An Act Concerning the Sale and Use of Consumer Grade Fireworks

Senator Osten, Representative Horn, Ranking Members Champagne and Howard, and distinguished members of the Public Safety and Security Committee:

My name is Jess Zaccagnino, and I am the policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony on SB 132, An Act Concerning the Sale and Use of Consumer Grade Fireworks.

The ACLU-CT is dedicated to ending mass incarceration. That effort requires that the General Assembly continue making progress towards reducing the number of people who enter the criminal legal system and reducing the amount of time that most people who do enter the system serve. Here, SB 132 addresses the setting off of late-night fireworks with a class c misdemeanor. Criminal penalization is a disproportionate response to the noise disturbance that people may experience from fireworks. Conviction of a misdemeanor for simply celebrating with fireworks will subject people to the more than 550 collateral consequences that people living with a criminal record face. Rather, this committee should substitute this criminal penalty with alternative solutions that will dissuade people from using fireworks at late hours.

Second, when determining who is eligible for a license to sell consumer fireworks, this committee should consider whether there is a substantial nexus between the type of crime a license applicant was convicted of and its relation to the sale of fireworks instead of a blanket ban on any person previously convicted of any felony. If this blanket ban were to remain in place, the legislature would add yet another collateral consequence that will stifle the ability of people living with a criminal record to cultivate a small business and provide for their families. A more individualized approach that evaluates the nexus between a crime, such as the misuse of fireworks or explosives, and a commercial firework sale license will guarantee safety without the wholesale exclusion of people from the industry.