

**BILL022(24)**  
**Testimony**

**MISC. COMM. 232**

PUBLIC SAFETY (PS)

## **PUBLIC SAFETY (PS) Meeting**

Meeting Date: May 23, 2024 @ 01:00 PM

Support: 12

Oppose: 0

I wish to comment: 0

Name: Sean Johnston	Email: seanjohn1997@yahoo.com	Zip: 96797
Representing: Self	Position: Support	Submitted: May 18, 2024 @ 01:46 PM
<p>Testimony:</p> <p>Aloha Chair Okimoto, Vice Chair Tulba, and Committee Members,</p> <p>My name is Sean Johnston, and I'm writing in support of Bill 22, which amends the Fire Code to allow the sale and use of ground-based consumer fireworks.</p> <p>I have cherished memories of celebrating New Year's Eve and the 4th of July with family and friends, eagerly anticipating the fun of sparklers and other fireworks. This tradition is something I want my son and daughter to experience, under proper parental supervision, just as my parents provided for me.</p> <p>Since the ban on consumer fireworks was enacted, many neighborhoods on Oahu have seen an increase in illegal aerial fireworks. Bill 22 offers a safer alternative, allowing families on Oahu to celebrate holidays with fireworks, similar to the neighbor islands. My family and I strongly urge you to pass Bill 22.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration.</p> <p>Sincerely, Sean Johnston</p>		
Name: Linda Haas	Email: lhass@fireworks.com	Zip: 95828
Representing: Phantom Fireworks Companies	Position: Support	Submitted: May 20, 2024 @ 11:26 AM
Name: Walter Gojo	Email: dubgee2002@yahoo.com	Zip: 96821
Representing: Self	Position: Support	Submitted: May 20, 2024 @ 03:44 PM
Name: Marc Okumura	Email: direct2polo@gmail.com	Zip: 96797
Representing: Self	Position: Support	Submitted: May 21, 2024 @ 07:41 AM
<p>Testimony:</p>		

I support BILL022(24). We are slowly losing our customs and traditions and though I understand the overall concern with regards to fireworks, I believe what is proposed in this bill is a happy medium between fireworks and public safety. Thank you for your consideration.

Name: Tad Trout	Email: anakama@wik.com	Zip: 96813
Representing: TNT Fireworks	Position: Support	Submitted: May 21, 2024 @ 08:38 AM

Name: Tina Yamak	Email: tyamaki@rmhawaii.org	Zip: 96816
Representing: Retail Merchants of Hawaii	Position: Support	Submitted: May 21, 2024 @ 11:51 AM

Name: Jodi Nakama	Email: jodi1269@yahoo.com	Zip: 96701
Representing: Self	Position: Support	Submitted: May 21, 2024 @ 12:12 PM

Name: Cori Weston	Email: cori.weston@gmail.com	Zip: 96825
Representing: Self	Position: Support	Submitted: May 22, 2024 @ 10:20 AM

Testimony:  
Aloha Chair Okimoto and Vice Chair Tulba and members of the Committee:

I am writing in strong support of Bill 22, which amends the Fire Code to permit the sale and use of ground-based consumer fireworks.

Honolulu's ban on consumer fireworks has had the unintended consequence of individuals going to the black market to purchase illegal aerial fireworks which pose a much greater safety risk to our community.

Bill 22 offers a safer alternative. Many of us have wonderful fun memories of family gatherings to celebrate New Year's Eve and July 4th with consumer fireworks such as the fountains, ground spinners and sparklers. This bill provides a reasonable and safe alternative for families to continue their treasured traditions of celebrating the holidays with safe fireworks and will reduce the demand for illegal fireworks.

Bill 22 is also an efficient use of our commendable and much appreciated police and fire resources, already stretched with keeping us safe and their time should not be spent on tracking these consumer non aerial fireworks enjoyed by families.

Mahalo for your consideration and support of Bill 22.

Cori Weston

Founder & CEO, CCW Associates, LLC.

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Marc Britos	mbritos46@gmail.com	96789
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Self	Support	May 22, 2024 @ 11:23 AM

Testimony:

Greetings Council Members, I, Marc Britos, appear to you today as a proud resident of Mililani and a father of three. I am deeply invested in the success of Bill 22, a proposal that will significantly benefit our community and our families.

My primary argument behind advocating for the enactment of this law is to safeguard our cultural and ancestral customs that were previously esteemed and commemorated during New Year's celebrations. As a child, I derived great pleasure from playing with sparklers and eagerly anticipated the illumination of the fountains on New Year's Eve. As a father, I regret not being able to allow my children to enjoy playing with fountains and sparklers and create their own moments of pleasure and memories. The exhilaration from using sparklers and fountains to light up the nights and the lasting memories made at New Year's Eve family gatherings has been wholly forgotten. By allowing families to participate in these exclusive consumer fireworks once more, we may renew and safeguard these customary rituals, a duty that we all collectively bear.

Now, let's discuss statistics. Medical emergencies due to fireworks decreased by 86% in the year following the enactment of the consumer fireworks bill. As a result of the restriction, the category of "relation to fires," which includes trash, structure, and wildlife fires, decreased by 89%. These are remarkable stats. The consumer fireworks bill undoubtedly made a big difference in the number of fires and medical issues caused by fireworks the year after the ban. However, it doesn't give a true or accurate image of the New Year's celebrations of 2023. The first few years were successful because of the limited black markets available. These days, the illicit fireworks business has grown exponentially, leading to an increase in the use of illegal aerial explosives and the accidents that follow. The situation was so bad that HPD developed a task force to ensure no cars were parked on the freeway, impeding traffic flow so they could watch the illegal aerials light up the skies. What message does this send to the public, that we will take secondary and tertiary measures to prevent potential accidents caused by illegal fireworks, but not address the root issue of their availability in the first place?

As I mentioned earlier, despite the ban, aerial exhibitions have been on the rise annually. Eradicating them is a challenge. However, Bill 22 offers a compromise by allowing the limited use of specific fireworks. This creates a large financial opportunity for the city and county while also promoting safety, relieving the burden on law enforcement, and reducing accidents and fires. Ultimately, this proposal strikes a harmonious balance between safety concerns and the preservation

of our cherished fireworks tradition.

I trust that you have recognized the value in my perspective and will persist in endorsing the passage of Bill 22 for the betterment of our community. Let's collaborate to discover a resolution that addresses both the imperative for safety and the inclination to commemorate with fireworks. I appreciate the time and thought you have afforded me.

Name: Jeffrey Weston	Email: jeffrey.weston1@gmail.com	Zip: 96825
Representing: Self	Position: Support	Submitted: May 22, 2024 @ 11:24 AM

Testimony:

Aloha Chair Okimoto, Vice Chair Tulba and members of the Committee:

This is submitted in strong support of Bill 22, which amends the Fire Code to permit the sale and use of ground-based consumer fireworks.

One of the very special traditions of Hawaii is enjoying consumer fireworks with our friends and families and I have wonderful memories of my children enjoying the fireworks with their cousins at Popo and Gung Gung homes and our aunties homes. It has not been the same since the bank on consumer fireworks.

The ban has had unintended consequences for our community and drives locals to the black market to purchase illegal aerals which poses a much greater safety risk to the community,

Bill 22 offers a safer alternative and provides a reasonable alternative to our families to continue life long traditions of celebrating the holidays. Bill 22 will also reduce the demand for illegal fireworks.

It's important that we keep our traditions as it is what makes Hawaii special.

Thank you for your support. I ask for your favorable consideration in passing this bill.

Jeffrey Weston

Name: Joni Tanimoto	Email: joni.chieko@gmail.com	Zip: 96789
Representing: Self	Position: Support	Submitted: May 22, 2024 @ 10:18 PM

Testimony:

May 23, 2024

Aloha Chair Okimoto, Vice Chair Tulba, and members of the Committee on Public Safety:

My name is Joni Tanimoto and I am a resident of Mililani, Oahu, Hawaii.

I am here today as a parent and a concerned citizen to express my strong support for Bill 22 (2024), which seeks to permit the sale and use of ground-based consumer fireworks.

Consumer fireworks have long been a part of our community's celebrations. They bring joy to our children's faces and create memories that last a lifetime. However, the current restrictions on the sale and use of consumer fireworks have unintended consequences. They have led to an increase in the black market for illegal aerial fireworks, which pose a greater safety risk to our community.

By supporting Bill 22, we can provide a safe and legal alternative for families who wish to continue the tradition of consumer fireworks during celebrations. This bill will not only help reduce the demand for illegal fireworks but also ensure that the fireworks being used meet safety standards.

A complete ban on consumer fireworks only pushes residents towards the dangerous and unpredictable black market for illegal aerial fireworks. Legal, regulated ground-based consumer fireworks provide a safer alternative.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support. Bill 22 offers a common-sense approach that prioritizes safety while allowing families to celebrate together.

Joni Tanimoto

Name: Jeremy Low	Email: Jeremylow@kingscentral.net	Zip: 96732
Representing: Kings Cathedral	Position: Support	Submitted: May 23, 2024 @ 11:16 AM

Testimony:

I Jeremy Low support bill022(24)

1. Family Traditional

Ive have so many memories of new year celebration, familys put money aside to buy fireworks, new year celebrations is a big tradition and not being able to have fireworks and legal fireworks it's not the same.

2. The fireworks that we sell is Safe and age appropriate. No matter what age we have firework for them

3. Great fundraiser for our non profit organization. It's a huge financial blessing for our organizations

What I love about it, is see the family year after year reminiscing about last years celebrations and looking forward to the next year celebration.

# PHANTOM FIREWORKS

Distributors of Phantom® and Wolf Pack® Brand Fireworks

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Linda Hass, West Coast Operations Manager

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May 20, 2024

Councilmember Val A. Okimoto, Chair  
Councilmember Augie Tulba, Vice-Chair  
Members of the Honolulu City Council, Committee on Public Safety

Bill 22 – Relating to the Fire Code  
Thursday, May 23, 2024, at 1:00 p.m.

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Dear Chair Okimoto and Vice Chair Tulba, and members of the Council. My name is Linda Hass, West Coast Operations Manager for Phantom Fireworks. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Bill 22.

The prospect of legalizing the sale and use of ground-based consumer fireworks is exciting for several reasons, but chief among them are the two reasons I'll discuss today.

Principally, with no legal consumer fireworks able to be purchased and used in Honolulu, the illegal market is left to flourish. I won't suggest that Bill 22 will completely eliminate illegal fireworks in Honolulu, but we've seen in other states that the inclusion of a legal option for consumer fireworks shows a downturn in illegal usage as early as year one. Many consumers will opt for the legal variant for the peace of mind it offers while still being able to celebrate their favorite holiday or religious event.

Currently, Phantom Fireworks works only with non-profit groups in Hawaii. Not only has this been good for Phantom, but selling fireworks is the biggest fundraiser of the year for many of the groups that we work with. These relationships tend to be long-term and mutually beneficial. With the ability to expand to Honolulu, we would be able to add more non-profit groups to our operations and ultimately grow both our footprint and theirs.

Legal, responsible, and safe consumer fireworks usage is the trend across the U.S., with injury rates plummeting while usage has soared in recent years. The inclusion of ground-based consumer fireworks should help to ease some of the illegal market while helping various non-profit groups at the same. For this reason, I respectfully urge the council to vote "yes" on Bill 22.

Sincerely,  
Linda Hass



May 20, 2024

Aloha Chair Okimoto, Vice Chair Tulba, and members of the Committee on Public Safety:

My name is Walter Gojo, and I am a resident of Honolulu, HI.

I am here today as a parent and a concerned citizen to express my strong support for Bill 22 (2024), which seeks to permit the sale and use of ground-based consumer fireworks.

Consumer fireworks have long been a part of our community's unique cultural celebrations. They bring joy to our children's faces, teach them about local "melting pot" culture and create memories that last a lifetime. However, the current restrictions on the sale and use of consumer fireworks have had unintended consequences. They have led to an increase in the black market for illegal aerial fireworks, which pose a greater safety risk to our community.

By passing Bill 22, we can provide a safe and legal alternative for families who wish to continue the tradition of consumer fireworks during celebrations. This bill will not only help reduce the demand for illegal fireworks but also ensure that the fireworks being used meet safety standards.

A complete ban on consumer fireworks only pushes residents towards the dangerous and unpredictable black market for illegal aerial fireworks. Legal, regulated ground-based consumer fireworks provide a safer alternative.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support. Bill 22 offers a common-sense approach that prioritizes safety while allowing families to celebrate together.



Walter Gojo



May 23, 2024

Councilmember Val Aquino Okimoto, Chair  
Councilmember Augie Tulba, Vice Chair  
Committee on Public Safety

**RE: BILL 22 (2024) Relating to the Fire Code**  
**Thursday, May 23, 2024 at 1:00 PM**

Aloha Chair Okimoto, Vice Chair Tulba, and Members of the Council:

Thank you for allowing TNT Fireworks (TNT) to submit testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of Bill 22 – Relating to the Fire Code. TNT is the largest distributor of fireworks in the U.S. and an importer and seller of legal and safe consumer fireworks in Hawaii. TNT has had a presence in Hawaii for over 50 years and we partner with retail partners such as Longs Drugs, Marukai, Don Quijote, Costco, Foodland, Malama Market, Food Pantry, Times Supermarkets and many others.

Bill 22 seeks to amend the state Fire Code to permit consumer fireworks such as fountains and sparklers while keeping aerial fireworks unlawful. The proliferation of illegal aerial devices is at an all-time high and legislative efforts aimed at strengthening enforcement and penalties for the use of illegal aerial devices have not proved successful. In the absence of an alternative, the proliferation of black-market access will only continue.

In 2010, the Honolulu City Council banned consumer fireworks except for firecrackers with a permit. The unintended consequence of this action was an inadvertent surge in black market activities as consumers sought alternative sources for consumer fireworks. The City and County of Honolulu is the only county in the state that prohibits consumer fireworks and, not a surprise, has the undesirable outcome with illegal aerials lighting up Honolulu skies on New Years Eve.

Instead of driving consumers to the black market, a safer alternative should be available. New York, New Jersey, Arizona, Delaware and others have modified their ban on consumer fireworks and allow the sale of consumer fireworks such as fountains and ground spinners, which produce significantly less smoke and noise. Currently, fireworks are allowed in 49 states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Hawaii consumers are enamored with fireworks and have a long cultural history of fireworks being an integral part of New Years and July 4th family celebrations.

**AMERICAN PROMOTIONAL EVENTS, INC.**  
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**[www.tntfireworks.com](http://www.tntfireworks.com)**



Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure and we look forward to working with all interested stakeholders to address this issue of reducing illegal aerals in our communities while providing a safer alternative to celebrate.

Brian Trim, Vice President

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**TESTIMONY OF TINA YAMAKI, PRESIDENT  
RETAIL MERCHANTS OF HAWAII  
May 23, 2024  
Re: BILL 22 (2024) –RELATING TO THE FIRE CODE**

Aloha, Chair Okimoto and members of the Honolulu City Council’s Committee on Public Safety. I am Tina Yamaki, President of the Retail Merchants of Hawaii and I appreciate this opportunity to testify.

The Retail Merchants of Hawaii, established in 1901, is a statewide nonprofit trade organization dedicated to supporting the growth and development of Hawaii’s retail industry. Our diverse membership includes small mom-and-pop stores, large box stores, resellers, luxury retailers, department stores, shopping malls, online sellers, local, national, and international retailers, chains, and more.

We strongly support Bill 22 (2024), which aims to amend the state Fire Code to permit consumer fireworks such as fountains and sparklers while maintaining the ban on illegal aerial fireworks.

Fireworks hold significant cultural importance in Hawaii’s Asian community, symbolizing the warding off of evil spirits and the ushering in of good luck and happiness. This tradition is especially prominent during the New Year and at events like weddings and business openings.

Allowing retailers to sell legal consumer fireworks and enabling the community to celebrate with these fireworks would be greatly appreciated. Additionally, we support the option for retailers to become licensed fireworks permit facilities if they so choose.

The City and County of Honolulu is the only county that has banned all fireworks including sparklers. Yes we see that this was not a viable solution as people still found ways to obtain them illegally. Aerial fireworks have been banned for several years in the state and yet we continue to see them year after year lighting up the skies from people’s residences, from the street fronting people’s homes, and at beaches to name a few. We have already seen that time limits on the use of fireworks are overlooked as we continue to see illegal ariels and “bombs” weeks before the actual holiday. People for years after the ban have found ways to purchase those illegal ariels and they do the same for all fireworks. We also want to point out that the already illegal aerial devices and fireworks like that of bottle rockets, roman candles, and mortar-and-shell fireworks as well as homemade fireworks caused the highest rates of significant injury.

Many legitimate retailers depended on the sale of legal fireworks, knowing that buyers must obtain a permit before purchase. A complete ban on fireworks imposed an additional financial burden on these law-abiding retailers, many of whom are still struggling to stay afloat. Nonprofits and churches also rely on seasonal pop-up sales of legal fireworks.

Banning fireworks does not eliminate the use of illegal fireworks in Hawaii. It is important to remember that illegal fireworks from the black market are unregulated and unsafe. Despite the long-standing ban on aerial fireworks, they continue to appear year after year. People have consistently found ways to obtain illegal fireworks, making those in the black market richer and will likely do the same if all fireworks continue to be banned.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

May 21, 2024

Councilmember Val Aquino Okimoto, Chair  
Councilmember Augie Tulba, Vice Chair  
Committee on Public Safety

**RE: BILL 22 (2024) Relating to the Fire Code**  
**Thursday, May 23, 2024 at 1:00 PM**

Aloha Chair Okimoto, Vice Chair Tulba, and Members of the Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of this measure. My name is Jodi Nakama and I respectfully ask that you pass Bill 22, which amends the Fire Code to allow the sale and use of ground-based consumer fireworks.

Growing up in Hawaii, I have cherished memories of celebrating numerous holidays with family and friends, and always looked forward to playing with fireworks such as fountains, ground spinners and sparklers. I have three children and would like them to have the same experience.

The current ban on consumer fireworks has led to a significant increase in illegal aerial fireworks, which have greater health and safety risks. Bill 22 offers a safer alternative.

My friends and family urge you to pass Bill 22 and allow families in the City & County of Honolulu to continue tradition while preserving public health and safety.

Mahalo,

Jodi Nakama