

December 4, 2018

Senator Coley
Chairperson, Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: Opposition to HB 228, the “Stand Your Ground” bill

Dear Chairman Coley and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jacob Spiegel I am a second year Ohio State student, originally from Cincinnati, Ohio. Thank you for giving me the time to hear my testimony. I am here today to share with you why, as a student, a member of the Jewish community, a buckeye, and I proud Ohioan am opposed to HB 228 and its sweeping rollbacks of public safety laws in our state.

Let me start with being a student. This one should be obvious to you. No one can ignore that common sense gun control affects the lives of students significantly. I have grown up in an America where I am used to school shootings. I have been learning training measures on how to survive an active shooter situation for as long as I can remember. At my Jewish day school, my public high school, and at The Ohio State University. I have friends who attended Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. I was a witness to the student movement of March for our Lives. This is the America I grow up in, and I am sick of it. There is so much that can be done to prevent more active shooters, but making it easier for those with no firearms safety training, violent criminals, and some drug offenders to carry concealed handguns in public does the opposite of this. It puts our lives at a greater risk, as can be proven by the increase in homicide rates in states that allow stand your ground bill to pass.

Next, I oppose this legislation as a member of the Jewish community. The republican party has always considered themselves allies of the Jewish community because they stand with Israel. When Hamas launches hundreds of rockets at our country, the U.S. – with strong support from the republican party – through financial ways allow Israel to defend itself. However, when our communities are attacked at home, as was the case in Pittsburgh (a community where I personally know people who attended that synagogue), the republican party idly stands by and does nothing to protect us from the violence in our own country. Now you seek to make it easier for terrorists such as the one who shot up that Pittsburgh synagogue to have access and reason for possession of firearms which endanger my community. It was Pittsburgh last month but with the passage of this bill it could be Cincinnati next month. It could be my community.

Lastly, I oppose this bill as a Buckeye. I am proud to attend Ohio State and I encourage anyone from across the country to join our community, a gemstone of the state of Ohio. But how could I advocate for a friend to move to this state, when this would put their lives more at risk of death by gun violence? How can we attract the bright minds that will lead the businesses and communities of tomorrow to our state if they know they could go somewhere where they would be inherently more safe from gun violence attacks because other states don't have a stand your ground bill?

I support the right to carry a firearm. I actually support concealed carry in certain situations, because I think there is a possibility that having responsible people carry firearms for self defense could lead to more safety for our community. But this bill is different. this removes the word “responsible” from that sentence and allows unsafe people to have greater access to carrying a firearm, making my community, my state, and myself less safe.

I am asking that Ohio lawmakers vote no on HB 228. I hope I can count on you to do that.

-Jacob Spiegel