

Adrienne Wagner
June 8, 2020
Testimony on House Bill 381
House Criminal Justice Committee

Dear Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to write to you in opposition to HB 381. I am writing today as a concerned private citizen, a parent, an employee of a local family-owned business, and a community member.

I oppose this bill because it will make Ohioans less safe, by encouraging the escalation of violence in public places when such violence is avoidable. As you know, multiple independent studies and different data sets reinforce the relationship between Stand Your Ground laws and an increase in firearm homicides. Please consider your duty to the safety of your constituents and do not advance this bill.

As you know, here in Ohio we already have the protection of traditional self-defense laws. These laws balance an individual's right to protect herself or himself with the sanctity of life. If you are committed to the sanctity of life, please make sure our laws require citizens to avoid taking a life if there is a safe and clear alternative.

As you also know, data show that Stand Your Ground laws disproportionately negatively impact black people. Multiple peer-reviewed studies have reached this conclusion. We know that, in states with Stand Your Ground laws, white Americans who kill black Americans successfully claim self-defense 36% of the time. Meanwhile, black Americans who kill white Americans successfully claim self-defense just 3% of the time. The combination of Stand Your Ground legislation and racial bias is deadly for black people. This is unjust and unfair, and it has no place here in Ohio.

I am a runner, and recently I began dedicating my runs to Ahmaud Arbery, who jogged through his community one day and ended up dead. His murderers claimed self-defense and almost escaped with impunity (and without even being arrested), until video footage surfaced to show they were lying. In the Stand Your Ground state of Georgia, they used the ruse of suspecting a crime to hunt and kill an innocent human being. Let us not encourage this kind of vigilante "justice" here in Ohio.

Please reject HB 381.

Thank you,

Adrienne Wagner