

June 9, 2020

Re: Opposition to HB 381, the “Stand Your Ground” Bill

Dear Mr. Lang and members of the committee,

I am Annie Volker. I am seventeen years old and the co-President of Grandview Heights High School’s chapter of Students Demand Action. I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak before you. I am here today to tell you that I oppose HB 381, and I urge you and your colleagues to do the same and vote against this bill. HB 381 will change Ohio for the worse. If we enact a stand your ground law, violence will be encouraged in situations with the ability to de-escalate, and it can protect people with dangerous histories. Each and every shared, public space would now have potential to be a place of violence and tragedy. Our streets, our schools, and our communities will not be safe. Our way of life will not be the same.

I have been lucky to grow up in a safe neighborhood, and I have always had the privilege to not worry about the threat of gun violence. I have looked forward to continuing to come of age in Ohio, but the safety, diversity, and peace of mind that I have always known and benefited from will be greatly affected if this law is enacted. In Florida, young adults between the ages of 20-34 experienced a 36% increase in firearm homicide rates. Additionally, there was a 32% overall increase in firearm homicide rates<sup>1</sup>. At least thirty people are killed each month nationwide due to Stand Your Ground laws<sup>2</sup>.

We simply cannot expect Ohio to be any different. Gun violence will rise as a result of this bill, and every one of you here should be aware of the consequences that will come from your vote.

In these past few months, tragedy has struck our nation. We have had previously unimaginable losses, but we have also been able to take a moment and think of what we want our future to look like. I have reflected on the past lockdown drills, the blacked out windows, and the stories that I have heard from young people across our community. I do not want to imagine a future with gun violence continuing to harm our communities, but if HB 381 passes, a future of uncertainty and distrust remains imminent. The bill puts all people at unnecessary risk, and is an action of great consequence.

I want a safe future for myself and others, and I would like you, the Criminal Justice committee to be mindful of this when voting. I am open to answering any questions you may have. Thank you.

## Notes

1. Humphreys DK, Gasparini A, Wiebe DJ. Evaluating the impact of Florida's "Stand Your Ground" Self-defense law on homicide and suicide by firearm: An interrupted time series study. *JAMA Intern Med.* 2017; 177(1): 44-50.
2. McClellan C, Tekin, E. Stand Your Ground laws, homicides, and injuries. *Journal of Human Resources.* 2017; 52(3): 621-653.