

Granville, June 8, 2020

Dear Chairman Lang, Vice-Chair Plummer, Ranking Minority Member Leland, and Members of the Criminal Justice Committee,

Thank you for accepting my written testimony today. My name is Barbara Fultner. I am an Ohio citizen residing in Granville, OH and a professor of philosophy at Denison University. I am strongly opposed to HB 381—especially at this moment in history.

As a college professor, I teach critical thinking and clear writing. The “stand-your-ground” bill before you is anything but. I challenge you to explain in clear lay terms what it is intended to accomplish and, specifically, under what conditions exactly someone would be justified to use lethal force against another whom they perceive as an aggressor. Moreover, especially at a time of wide-spread public outrage at unjustified police brutality and societal racism, considering a law that relies on what someone might perceive to be a “reasonable” amount of force is deeply problematic. Amy Cooper, for example, seemed to think it reasonable to call the police and tell them she was being threatened when a black man asked her to leash her dog. Trayvon Martin and Ahmaud Arbery were both claimed to have been perceived as threats, and stand-your-ground laws made it more difficult to charge their killers.

These cases illustrate that, in a society pervaded by systemic and institutional racism, whites often perceive blacks and other people of color as inherently threatening and as aggressors. In such a context, a stand-your-ground law is liable to lead to vigilantism and to be disproportionately invoked against African Americans and people of color. As a result, such a law would exacerbate already existing inequalities among Ohio’s citizenry.

I therefore urge you to vote against this bill.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Dr. Barbara Fultner  
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