

WRITTEN TESTIMONY FOR HOUSE BILL - HB 381: STAND YOUR GROUND
Chairman Lang, Vice Chairman Plummer, Ranking Member, and members of the
Criminal Justice Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to provide written testimony today. My name is Beth Crawford, I have worked in social services for over 20 years, I am a mother of an elementary aged boy and currently reside in Westerville, Ohio. I have been an Ohioan for most of my life and have always been a proponent of social justice. I strongly oppose HB 381: Stand your Ground.

Your constituents are making their voices heard. You saw them risking exposure to COVID-19 as you drove past or walked past while they protested. As all evidence has shown, we need to be moving away from this idea of individual's arming themselves and making judgements about when to shoot. Our energies need to be towards finding ways we can build a better criminal justice system for everyone with attention on equitable policies on how that system needs to work for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. Your committee has a lot of work to do and this house bill is not that work.

I fear that this bill will in fact increase homicides, not deter serious crimes, and create even more racial disparities in the criminal justice system. Victor Ruiz, cleveland.com editorial board member, writes "Republicans' timing around this gun legislation adds insult to injury and is insensitive to families who've experienced gun violence. While I understand that, politically, Ohio 'bleeds red,' and that sensible gun reform isn't on the horizon, at a minimum, we need to show respect for lives lost and have a discussion on how to end these types of tragedies." I couldn't agree more and Ohioans are watching.

As I talk with my son about white privilege and about racial injustices, I need to be able to explain how our laws and policies are supporting and undoing the harm that has been perpetuated over the years. We teach our children to walk away; why would we have a law that supports the opposite. You have been elected to do your research and to listen to the people of the great state of Ohio. We have been leading the race to address a pandemic and now it is time to stand up and lead the race to really protect all Ohioans, not just those who want more lenient gun laws.

Now is the time to figure out how we bring people together and not create a further divide in our communities. We must work together for solutions to de-escalate violence, not add fuel to the fire that is all ready burning. The people of Ohio are tired of seeing people killed. We are in a time where you can listen. We are in a time where you can learn. We are in a time where you can make history by helping all of your constituents. Please vote NO on Housebill 381.

Thank you for your time.
Beth Crawford
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