



Re. Opponent testimony for House Bill 381  
To: House Criminal Justice Committee Health  
From: Colleen Dempsey, LISW-S, Practice Associate

June 9, 2020

Good morning Chair Lang, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Minority Member Leland, and the rest of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony this morning on House Bill 381 also known as *Stand Your Ground*. My name is Colleen Dempsey. I am a Licensed Independent Social Worker and the Practice Associate for the Ohio Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.

NASW Ohio opposes *Stand Your Ground* laws, not because we want to limit the opportunities for legitimate claims of self-defense, but because *Stand Your Ground* laws have a demonstrated history of racial bias in their application and are also ineffective in deterring crime. As such, these laws do not align with NASW's ethics and values, particularly regarding anti-discrimination and evidence-based policy.

Racism is a public health crisis. Implicit bias studies continue to show that Black people and other people of color are more likely to be viewed as threatening regardless of reality. There is a preponderance of evidence that *Stand Your Ground* laws have been applied with a quantifiable racial bias. *Stand Your Ground* laws provide cover to individuals with unaddressed racial bias who aggressively "defend" regardless of the themselves when retreat is a safer and more reasonable option. The recent tragic death of Ahmaud Arbery is demonstration enough that the expansion of castle doctrine can be disastrous, particularly for Black men.

A 2020 report for the Trump Administration by the United States Commission on Civil Rights also found *Stand Your Ground* laws to be ineffective vehicles for deterring crimes such as burglary, robbery, or aggravated assault. Notably, homicides increased in states with enacted *Stand Your Ground* laws by a statistically significant eight percent.

We urge you to vote no on this dangerous bill. Thank you for your time. I can be reached for follow up questions at [cdempsey.naswoh@socialworkers.org](mailto:cdempsey.naswoh@socialworkers.org) or 614-461-4484 x 2