

Testimony on House Bill 381
House Criminal Justice Committee
Submitted by: Emily Knowles
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Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the committee, thank you for considering my testimony in opposition to HB 381. I am writing to you today as a citizen asking for fair, responsible and evidence-based governance. I oppose this bill because it does not solve a problem and its abuse could endanger the citizens of our state. Stand Your Ground legislation has been proposed several times in Ohio and never been made into law because it is poor policy that does not advance public safety.

Last year during hearings on a previous version of this bill I listened to clergy, law enforcement and parents from the African-American community testify about the fear and mistrust that Stand Your Ground brings out in their neighborhoods. Anxiety that racial bias and inequities in the justice system will cause this law to be used against the African-American community is valid, as recently demonstrated by the Ahmaud Arbery case, and backed by the evidence from states that have enacted Stand Your Ground legislation. In Florida, Stand Your Ground cases with minority victims are half as likely to lead to conviction, compared to cases with white victims. And when white shooters kill Black victims, the resulting homicides are deemed justifiable 11 times more frequently than when the shooter is Black and the victim is white. Ackermann N, Goodman MS, Gilbert K, Arroyo-Johnson C, Pagano M. Race, law, and health: Examination of 'Stand Your Ground' and defendant convictions in Florida. *Social Science & Medicine*. 2015; 142: 194–201

While Ohio is facing many challenges today, our existing self-defense law is not one of them. Nothing in Ohio law puts me in danger of going to prison if I were ever in the unlikely position where I had to defend the lives of myself or my children. There is only a duty to retreat when there is a clear and safe way to do so. We do not have prisons full of people who have lost their freedom after defending themselves or others with deadly force when they had no choice. Have you ever heard about a single case of this? The duty to retreat, when it's an option, is logical and righteous. Ohio law should not exonerate someone for taking a life unnecessarily or create a haven for anyone provoking violence. Please oppose HB 381.