

Testimony on House Bill 381
House Criminal Justice Committee

Submitted by:
Joan Calem

Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to HB 381 (Stand Your Ground).

I am writing to you today as a parent and an educator. I oppose this bill because it will make all Ohioans less safe. We already have a public health crisis in this country because of ongoing gun violence. This bill will make Ohioans even less safe.

Ohio law already allows people to be exonerated from murder charges after they have killed someone by using a firearm if: (1) they were not at fault in creating the violent situation; (2) they believed that they were in imminent danger of death or bodily harm and that their only means of escape was the use of force, and (3) that they did not violate any duty to retreat or avoid danger.

HB 381, as currently submitted, will further loosen these restrictions, allowing a subjective feeling of being under threat on the part of the killer as enough reason to allow a murder to take place and be exonerated under the auspices of HB381. This bill will potentially expose Ohioans to cases such as the recent shooting of Ahmaud Arbery, an innocent black man shot and killed while he was out for a morning jog in Georgia, on a route that he did on a daily basis. Georgia prosecutors delayed charging the murderers because of Georgia's Stand Your Ground laws, in which the three perpetrators claimed that they felt that they were under threat by this young unarmed man. Film from cameras showed the opposite was true, but that won't bring Ahmaud Arbery back to life.

Please do something to help keep our state safer than it currently is. Please do not pass this bill.

Sincerely,
Joan Calem