

Chairman Lang, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the Criminal Justice Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Lydia Hall. I am a white teacher living in Cleveland Heights, OH, whose students are a majority of people who racially identify as black, African-American, biracial, Latinx, Asian-American, or POC. I am strongly opposed to HB 381.

“Stand your ground” laws have allowed armed citizens to take the law into their own hands without the training and accountability of public law enforcement officers, with disproportionately harmful results for people of color.

“Stand your ground” laws vary, but they generally extend immunity to criminal prosecution or in some cases, civil suits, for the use of deadly force in self-defense beyond the home. These laws expand a longstanding and tested doctrine by which deadly force may be used in self-defense or to prevent a forcible felony when one is in the safety of one’s home, **to include “any other place where he or she has a right to be.”** Since Florida passed the first stand your ground law in 2005, at least 30 other states have followed suit, either through legislative action or court decisions.

Stand Your Ground laws upend centuries of traditional self-defense doctrine and threaten public safety by encouraging armed vigilantism, allowing a person to kill another person in a public area even when they can clearly and safely walk away from the danger.

These laws are associated with increases in homicides and injuries across different demographics and neighborhoods, while disproportionately impacting communities of color. They encourage the escalation of violence in avoidable situations and do not deter crime. Lawmakers should put the safety of their constituents first and reject dangerous Stand Your Ground proposals.

Trayvon Martin was not my student. But he could have been.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful, dangerous, and racially-biased bill, HB 381. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
Lydia J. Hall
Cleveland Heights, OH
617-680-7663 (cell)