

Testimony on House Bill 381
House Criminal Justice Committee

Submitted by: Nichole Michaels, PhD, on June 8, 2020

Chairman Lang, Vice Chairman Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, I appreciate you allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to HB 381. My name is Nichole Michaels, and as a voting constituent, I hope you will take the time to consider my remarks.

I am a research scientist and have dedicated more than 17 years of my career to preventing injury-related morbidity and mortality, particularly among children and adolescents. I could certainly provide you with plenty of data on the dangers of so-called “Stand Your Ground” laws, but I suspect that you are already aware that these laws increase firearm-related injuries and homicides. I expect that you also know that Stand Your Ground laws have not been shown to be a deterrent to crime. And perhaps you also know Stand Your Ground laws disproportionately negatively impact minority populations. The data clearly indicate that Stand Your Ground laws allow white individuals to murder people of color with a significantly lower risk of consequence compared to when the shooter is of a minority race and the victim is white (Roman, 2013; Ackermann, et al., 2015). And it is this last point that strikes me as most disturbing, particularly in light of this committee’s decision to pursue Stand Your Ground legislation during a time when Americans across the country are reckoning with the rampant institutionalized racism that allows people of color to be murdered without consequence, sometimes by individuals who have sworn to serve and protect all citizens. This is unconscionable.

As I said in the beginning, I’m a scientist. I can give you an abundance of data points to show you why Stand Your Ground will cause more injuries and deaths, particularly among young adults and people of color. But today, I’m just going to ask you to stop and look around at what is going on in our state and in this nation before you pass one more law that will unduly burden minority populations and further racial injustice.