

Testimony on House Bill 381  
House Criminal Justice Committee

Submitted by:  
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Dear Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the committee: thank you for allowing me to share this testimony in opposition to HB 381. I am writing to you today as a volunteer at the Franklin County Suicide Hotline, where I field calls from individuals in crisis situations.

While the majority of our callers who express violent urges are experiencing a suicidal crisis, we also field many calls from individuals who voice homicidal ideation. Typically these are callers who are in the midst of an interpersonal conflict and are consumed by rage towards other people, be they domestic partners, relatives, employers, or strangers.

Much study has been dedicated to the psychology and thought processes of a human being in a state of crisis. When people are in emotional distress, we know that their perception of external threats is often exaggerated; their bodies and brains gear up for self-protection in a “fight or flight” response. It is our job at the hotline to help calm people down who may be in this frame of mind, so that they do not behave rashly and needlessly harm themselves or others. In almost every case, after 10-15 minutes speaking with us, the caller has de-escalated and realizes that violent behavior would have profound and lasting consequences. I believe we save a lot of lives.

HB 381 is dangerous because it encourages citizens to act on emotional impulses rather than trying to slow down and think a situation through. In almost every situation, there is a non-violent solution and an opportunity for de-escalation. We need to encourage individuals to exercise restraint and walk away from potentially dangerous situations rather than rush to violent solutions.

Current law allows that individuals have the right to defend themselves if there is not a clear and safe path to retreat, which is logical and reasonable. Conversely, HB 381

would allow individuals to behave as vigilantes even when a clear and safe path to retreat exists. This is neither logical nor reasonable, and the safety of our communities would suffer.

We should not be encouraging our citizens to behave violently in non-lethal situations. Instead, we should be providing resources and training to community members so that they better understand how to defuse conflict and de-escalate potentially dangerous situations.

Please do the right thing for public safety and oppose HB 381. Thank you.