

Testimony on House Bill 381
House Criminal Justice Committee

Submitted by:
Robin Hawkins

Chairman Lang, 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. I am writing to you today as the wife of an Emergency Room physician, the mother of a police sergeant and grandmother of five Ohio children. I support the second amendment and **responsible gun ownership** which should **ALWAYS** include training and proficiency in safe storage and usage. I **oppose** this bill because it will make **ALL** Ohioans less safe.

When people choose to arm themselves at home for protection they are exposing themselves and their families to several significant risks: that the firearm could be used against them in a confrontation in which they are overcome or surprised, that the firearm could be accessed and fired by a member of their household unintentionally or used in a suicide attempt, or that it could be stolen and used to commit crimes.

Stand Your Ground introduces **even more significant and unacceptable risks for everyone, not just the gun owner**, as the armed person with a false sense of security, erroneously believes they can now protect themselves anywhere they go, and feels entitled to “protect” themselves against any low level altercation or disagreement by shooting the other person “in self-defense” without any attempt to leave or de-escalate or call for help. It is a false narrative with often deadly results. Current law already protects those with a permit to carry a concealed weapon in the event they must defend themselves against a lethal threat.

The other obvious problem is that Stand Your Ground emboldens armed, self-appointed vigilantes and law enforcement wannabees to insert themselves into situations with no training as the “good guy with a gun” who shows up “ready” to shoot. We have seen recent horrific examples of how Stand Your Ground laws helped create situations where armed people felt entitled to chase down unarmed individuals or to verbally accost and then shoot those with whom they are having an argument over a parking place.

The data does not support these laws. Stand Your Ground and Permitless Carry have been demonstrated to increase gun violence everywhere they have been implemented. I am most familiar with Florida where my husband and I had a second home and one of my sons still lives. The implementation of Florida’s Stand Your Ground law was associated with a 32 % increase in firearm homicide rates* and a 24 % increase in overall homicide rates** as described in recent Journal of the American Medical Association articles (see references below).

We have experienced this threat ourselves. A close family friend, who had nearly been run over in a Florida crosswalk in an affluent neighborhood, was screamed at by the

driver of the car. When he approached the car to find out what the driver was saying, the driver reached over to a weapon on the passenger seat and was in the process of raising it to his open window to aim it at our friend who wisely ran away. (FYI: Both were white adult males.) The driver, emboldened by Florida's Stand Your Ground law no doubt thought he could claim he "felt threatened" by the unarmed runner. It is terrifying to contemplate.

It is unconscionable to erode public safety by weakening gun safety laws. Doing so during the current Covid-19 crisis makes it even worse as we now have more first-time gun owners than ever before.

As elected officials empowered to protect the citizens of Ohio, you have a duty to base your decisions on facts, data and the testimony of experts. I hope you can rise to the occasion and defeat this bill.

Thank you,

Robin Hawkins