

OHIO Testimony SB180

My name is Michele Mueller. I live in Hamilton County and I'm a volunteer with Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America in Cincinnati. I came into this movement because of the tragedy at Sandy Hook. But what has kept me fighting is the everyday loss of life that occurs in our communities. I am sick to death of the gun violence that is killing 93 people a day. I am here today to represent the grassroots volunteers of Ohio Moms Demand Action and our gun violence survivors.

Senate Bill 180 would make Ohio a Stand Your Ground state and decriminalize the carrying of hidden, loaded handguns in public without a permit. This combination is dangerous and would take Ohio in the wrong direction.

The current permitting system contains the safeguards of a criminal background check and safety training, to make sure not just anyone can carry a concealed handgun in our communities. Ohioans trust this system. In fact, a March 2016 study showed that 90% of Ohioans support it. This bill weakens the system by effectively allowing people to carry concealed handguns in public without a permit. This does not make me feel safer, knowing people carrying handguns in my community will no longer have to go through those safety measures. Not to mention the issues this will cause with law enforcement when interact with people carrying guns without permit.

The Stand Your Ground portion of this bill is equally egregious. Ohio already has a self-defense law that works perfectly well and this bill is a solution searching for a problem. There is no need to create a culture of "shoot first, ask questions later." Additionally, the research is clear: Stand Your Ground laws do not deter crime. Instead, they encourage armed vigilantism, disproportionately affect communities of color, and are associated with increases in homicide rates. A study by researchers at Texas A&M found that in 21 states Stand Your Ground laws are associated with a clear increase in homicides, resulting in 600 more homicides per year. A 2013, study by Mayors Against Illegal Guns found that the justifiable homicide rates increased by 53% in states that passed Stand Your Ground laws, while they decreased by 5% in states without these laws. In fact, after Florida passed its Stand Your Ground law, its justifiable homicide rate tripled and was linked to a 32 percent increase in firearm homicides.

In the wake of three horrific mass shootings in Las Vegas, Texas, and California I'm at a loss for why this committee feels like now is the time to pass a bill that would weaken Ohio gun laws. We should instead focus on other policies that actually reduce gun violence, like working to keep guns out the hands of domestic violence abusers. I respectfully urge this committee to vote NO on SB 180.