

December 4, 2018

Senator Coley  
Chairperson, Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee  
1 Capital Square  
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chairman Coley and Members of the Committee,

My name is Abby Lefton. I am a resident of Cincinnati, Ohio and am a senior at Sycamore High School. I am an organizer for Lobbying for a Safer Tomorrow, an organization created by Ohio high school students with the intent of advocating for common sense gun reform as individuals who are impacted by it on a daily basis. Thank you for taking the time today to hear my testimony. Today, I am here to share with you why, as a student and Jewish individual, I am opposed to HB 228 and its crippling effects on public safety in our state.

As a student, I recognize that every time I walk into school, it could be my last. When our school is put into lockdown for active shooters in the area, not only does it halt the progress of learning for the hours we spend barricaded in our classrooms, but it sets off panic in students, especially those with special needs and PTSD. This all too-common occurrence is becoming frequent and normalized. Therefore, I believe in preventative measures that de-escalate situations, not ones which add more violence on top of already violent situations. HB 228 encourages people to impulsively act on their irrational flight-or-fight emotions instead of thinking through a situation. This bill would give citizens more latitude to shoot than the military gives its own soldiers in war zones. In Florida, the bill was even linked to a 39% increase in firearm homicides, while homicides that were deemed justifiable tripled. I am asking you, why add violence to violence? This bill would strip us of the preventative and de-escalation measures that save lives.

I am also asking you as a Jewish individual living in a year with the largest single increase of anti-semitic incidents on record, how will this bill prevent and protect me from unsought violence headed my way. After the massacre at Tree-of-Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, I was sitting in class when I noticed a commotion across the table. I looked up to see my classmate holding his hands in the shape of a gun pointed right at me. He pretends to shoot me as my peers laugh and egg him on. When he sees my expression of disgust and dismay, he says "too soon?". With the anti-semitic actions morphing into attacks via firearms, this bill would embolden violent individuals to attack and disregard the law because if caught unlawfully carrying a hidden, loaded handgun in public, HB 228 would reduce their actions to a first-degree misdemeanor to a fine of \$150 - the same, if not less than a speeding ticket.

If you only take away one thing from me speaking to you today, please understand that the stand your ground law facilitates violence which causes more death in the places it is implemented, the data proves it. We've seen this to be true in malls, schools, parking lots, the streets of our neighbors, but the place I refuse to see this happen is in our beautiful state of Ohio. I am asking that you vote no on HB 228 in the name of preventing violence, not encouraging it. I hope that I can count on your vote. Thank you again for your time

Sincerely,

Abigail Lefton  
7870 Elbrecht Drive  
Cin, OH, 45242  
(513) 846-6121 [abbylefton@gmail.com](mailto:abbylefton@gmail.com)