4/10/18

Dear Committee Chair Bacon, Vice-Chair Dolan, Ranking Member Thomas, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee,

I want to thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony today regarding my thoughts on Senate Bill 180. I represent Progress NW Ohio, a progressive citizen advocacy group. Our members recently participated in March for Our Lives events in Sandusky, Cleveland, and our nation's capital; and as a result, we have a renewed focus on advocating for measures that would prevent gun violence not only in our schools, but also in our own communities, and communities all over Ohio. When we heard students and community leaders speak at these marches, not one of them spoke for the need for more permissive legislation such as SB 180; in fact, the unifying thread of all the marches was the need for stricter, more comprehensive controls on gun-related legislation.

Unfortunately, SB 180, commonly referred to as Stand Your Ground legislation, would do much to increase gun violence in Ohio, not reduce it. SB 180 would thoughtlessly overturn years of self-defense doctrine, and promote dangerous vigilantism, even in situations where there is a safe, public option for retreat. Studies have repeatedly shown that this legislation makes communities more dangerous, not less. A Texas A&M study demonstrated that in 21 states, SYG laws were associated with a stunning increase in homicides. In 2013, *The Tampa Bay Times* found that children and young people have been victims of these laws: 26 children and teens have been murdered in Florida since the inception of the SYG law there in 2005. Furthermore, a 2016 Journal of American Medical Association study found that the law was associated with a 24.4% increase in homicide and a 31.6% increase in firearm-related homicide in Florida, when compared with states that did not have this type of law. Ironically, one of the states used as a control in that study was Ohio.

In addition, these Stand Your Ground laws would have a devastating effect on communities of color

and perpetuate racial injustice. Studies have shown that when white shooters kill black victims under SYG. those homicides are considered justified 11 times more frequently than when the reverse is true. Also, in Florida, when the victim of a SYG case is a minority, the murderer is half as likely to be convicted.

Laws such as SB 180 have been crafted at the insistence of special interests looking to further their own agendas and profit margins; they are NOT what Ohioans asked for. As a result, I am respectfully asking this Committee to oppose SB 180.

Sincerely,

Sonal Vyas-Weit

Opponent testimony