

Testimony on House Bill 796  
House Civil Justice Committee

Submitted by:  
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Chair Hambley, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to HB 796. I am writing to you today as a private citizen, parent, and grandparent. I oppose this bill because we know that it will make Ohioans less safe.

HB796 would put all Ohioans at risk by making Ohio a “Stand Your Ground” state. It would change traditional Ohio self-defense law and allow a person to shoot to kill in public, even when there is a clear and safe alternative, which is more leeway to shoot than our soldiers have in war zones. If preserving life is our goal, and it should be, then we would want any Ohioan to retreat from what they perceive to be a dangerous situation, not escalate it by drawing a weapon.

We have seen the tragic results of Stand Your Ground laws across the country. From arguments over parking spaces and loud music in Florida, to a Texas man who called 911 and was told to stay inside, but decided to pull out a shotgun and kill two men whom he thought had burglarized his neighbor’s home, to Louisiana where a young man fired into a retreating SUV claiming he was afraid that someone would jump out of the vehicle with a gun. He killed a 15 year old. (ProPublica, Five Stand Your Ground Cases You Should Know About, June 8, 2012) The most recent tragedy where “Stand Your Ground’ was claimed is Ahmaud Arbery, a young man out for a jog who was stalked, threatened, and murdered for no reason at all. The evidence of the tragic effects of this law is overwhelming.

According to a study by Mark Hoekstra at Texas A&M University, who analyzed national crime statistics found that “homicides go up by 7-9 percent in states that pass the laws, relative to states that didn’t pass the laws over the same time period.” He also added that he found “no evidence of any deterrence effect over that same time period.” (Stand Your Ground Linked to Increase in Homicides, NPR, 1/2/2013)

16 months ago I attended a vigil in Dayton for 9 innocent victims who were gunned down in less than a minute by a young man with a powerful weapon. I was in the crowd asking our lawmakers to “do something” to decrease gun violence in our state. So far you have done nothing, and this law would take us backwards. This is not what I want for the state where I was born, raised, and raised my children. We are smarter than this. We are better than this. We are Ohio.