

December 2, 2020

Re: Opposition to HB 796, the “Stand Your Ground” Bill

Dear Mr. Hambley and members of the committee,

My name is Annie Volker. I am a resident of Columbus and currently a freshman at Wesleyan University. I am here today to tell you that I oppose HB 796, and I urge you and your colleagues to do the same and vote against this bill. To repeat what the many calls, emails, testimonies you have received said, HB 796 will change Ohio for the worse. If we enact a stand your ground law, violence will be encouraged in situations with the ability to de-escalate. Each and every shared, public space would now have greater potential to be a place of violence and tragedy. Our streets, our schools, and our communities will not be safe. Gun violence has already been devastating to too many Ohioans, and this bill will only make things worse.

As you may know, in Florida, young adults between the ages of 20-34 experienced a 36% increase in firearm homicide rates. Additionally, there was a 32% overall increase in firearm homicide rates¹. At least thirty people are killed each month nationwide due to Stand Your Ground laws². The facts are clear, and we simply cannot expect Ohio to be any different. Gun violence will rise as a result of this bill, and every one of you here should be aware of the consequences that will come from your vote. With fear and tension at an all time high due to the ongoing pandemic, a law like this is just ridiculous. Your jobs are to protect and keep our communities safe. Voting yes to HB796 is completely contradictory to what you are here to do.

Going to college in Connecticut has completely altered my view of our government. After the tragic Sandy Hook Elementary shooting, state legislators decided to protect their citizens from future gun violence through common sense legislation. It is extremely disappointing to come home to see a bill such as this being considered. Ohioans suffered in Dayton in 2019, as well as everyday across our state, but we continue to see these bills only perpetuating violence. There will be lives lost due to this bill. I have always seen a future for myself in Ohio, but it is so much easier to see a future for myself in places where people learn from the past and the government values their people.

People are exhausted from living in fear, but this bill does nothing to solve this. There have been so many lives lost and torn apart from gun violence, and there will unfortunately only be more in the future. Please consider the future generations of Ohioans when voting on HB796. Empathy should not be too much to ask for. Thank you.

Notes

1. Humphreys DK, Gasparini A, Wiebe DJ. Evaluating the impact of Florida's "Stand Your Ground" Self-defense law on homicide and suicide by firearm: An interrupted time series study. *JAMA Intern Med.* 2017; 177(1): 44-50.
2. McClellan C, Tekin, E. Stand Your Ground laws, homicides, and injuries. *Journal of Human Resources.* 2017; 52(3): 621-653.