

December 2, 2020
House Civil Justice Committee
1 Capitol Square Columbus, OH 43215

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

Dear Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony in opposition to House Bill 796. My name is Julie Elkus and I am a resident of Cincinnati, Ohio. I am writing today to express my concerns regarding this bill and its potential impact on the safety of Ohio citizens.

1,500 Ohioans were killed by guns last year, more than the number who were victims of deadly traffic accidents. In order to save lives, it is imperative that you, our state legislators, do everything in your power to ensure the safety of Ohio citizens when it comes to firearms. HB 381 does just the opposite. While the purported intent of this legislation is to improve public safety, data demonstrates that states who have implemented similar laws experience an increase in homicides with no commensurate reduction in violent crime. We have an opportunity to learn from these experiences and not repeat the mistakes of other states. Passing this legislation means ignoring facts and knowingly passing legislation that does more harm than good.

Data also proves what we have witnessed in horrific video footage – that people of color are disproportionately harmed by these laws. Ahmed Aubrey, unarmed and out for a jog, was shot and killed by two armed white men who have claimed self-defense. It’s not hard to imagine that the shooters were emboldened by Georgia’s “stand your ground” laws. The tragic death of George Floyd earlier this year underscores the deadly threat that racism poses to members of the African American community. We should be spending time identifying opportunities to address issues of social justice and institutional racism, rather than passing laws that have been shown to increase risk, harm and homicides for citizens.

I respectfully ask that you protect the safety of all Ohioans by voting no on this bill.