

Testimony on House Bill 796
House Civil Justice Committee
December 2, 2020

Submitted by:
Mandy Rothgerber

Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony on House Bill 796. My name is Mandy Rothgerber and I have been a resident of Hudson, Ohio, a mostly white community, for one year, since moving there for my husband's job. I am a native of Louisville, KY, a community reeling from the murder of Breonna Taylor in March. She was shot at least eight times by Louisville police who raided her house without warning. She was an EMT saving lives and the man who police were looking for was already in custody. So as I was preparing this testimony, I asked my friend Vera if she could share with me, as a black woman, what "stand your ground" laws mean to her. Her exact words were, "come on, Mandy. It means we have no rights. We're going to jail, beat up etc. To the white man we are animals. The law might be the law, but different consequences for people of color."

She is absolutely right.¹ We are not here today because anyone supporting Stand Your Ground wants my friend Vera to feel safer. Me to feel safer. My 14-year-old daughter to feel safer. We are here in the midst of a pandemic and our country being on fire because of a deadly, racist, sexist agenda. A law being thrust upon women and black and brown people who continue to be murdered and harassed while the NRA and their supporters try and instill fear in anyone and everyone who disagrees with them.

Proponents of Stand Your Ground have nothing to say to defend their bill except for appeals to emotions and fear. Statistics are clear that states with weaker gun laws—especially Stand Your Ground—see more gun deaths.² This bill being passed increases the chances of people dying—people like Ahmaud Arbery, an innocent, unarmed jogger who was chased and shot and whose killers claimed the Stand Your Ground defense, which is the law in Georgia. Ohio's Black and brown community will be forced to live in fear that the same thing can happen to them if this bill passes here.

Encouraging the use of excessive force is the last thing our burning and divided country needs. The citizens who truly want this nation to be great have a far different version of what

¹ Stand Your Ground laws have a disproportionate effect on people of color. Statistics show that when white shooters kill Black victims, the resulting homicides are deemed justifiable *eleven* times more frequently than when the shooter is Black and the victim is white. Roman, J. (2013). Race, Justifiable Homicide, and Stand Your Ground Laws: Analysis of FBI Supplementary Homicide Report Data. Urban Institute. Retrieved from <http://urbn.is/2gGvGvM>.

² Sees <https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/stand-your-ground/violent-crime.html>.

that greatness is. We cannot achieve life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness if we are willing to shoot and kill each other out of fear.

Stand Your Ground will cause more fires and encourage more modern-day lynching that see black men being hunted down and murdered. Ahmaud. Trayvon. Countless others. You must consider the safety of all Ohioans and especially those who are most threatened by this bill. Please say NO to HB 796.