

Testimony of House Bill 796

House Civil Justice Committee

Submitted By:

Michelle Bell

Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to HB796. My name is Michelle Bell and I am a Cleveland resident and voter. I am a mother and grandmother. I am also a part-time college instructor and a retired federal employee (35 years). I urge you to vote against HB 796 which will put more people at risk for being a victim of gun violence.

Laws that eliminate the Duty to Retreat when it is safe to do so—otherwise known as “Stand Your Ground” laws—are associated with an increase in firearm injuries resulting emergency room visits and hospitalizations. In an average month, at least 30 people nationwide are killed as a result of Stand Your Ground laws.¹

As an African-American, this bill deeply concerns me because Stand Your Ground laws have a disproportionate effect on communities of color. Research shows that when white shooters kill Black victims, the resulting homicides are deemed justifiable 11 times more frequently than when the shooter is Black and the victim is white.²

As a mother surviving the murder loss of my son, I see this bill burying more sons, daughters, fathers, mothers, nephews, nieces, grandchildren and friends. I have not found any study or evidence that broadening self-defense laws with deterring crime—instead all studies show just the opposite.³

I urge you to vote no on HB 796.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Bell

¹ <https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-inherent-danger-of-stand-your-ground-laws/>

² Roman J. Race, justifiable homicide, and Stand Your Ground Laws: Analysis of FBI Supplementary Homicide Report data. *Urban Institute*. 2013.

³ <https://www.rand.org/blog/2019/09/stand-your-ground-laws-increase-violence.html>