

Testimony on HB 796
Civil Justice Committee

Submitted by: Rebecca Gorski

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 House Bill 796.

My name is Rebecca Gorski, I am a resident of House District 76 in Chesterland, and I strongly oppose HB796.

HB796 specifies “a person has no duty to retreat before using force”, including lethal force, “in self-defence or defence of another.” This bill would allow a person to shoot and kill in public, even when there is a clear and safe alternative. Removing the duty to retreat that traditionally exists in public settings before using force in self-defence encourages escalated violence in situations that could be diffused in other ways. HB796 is a Stand Your Ground bill, allowing anyone to shoot at will, and to shoot anyone who makes them nervous.

Laws similar to HB796 are a threat to public safety, with no evidence these laws deter crime. In 2016 *Epidemiologic Reviews*, the leading review journal in public health, published a review of research looking at laws similar to HB796, removing the duty to retreat, and found a correlation these laws and an increase in homicide rates¹. In other states laws removing the duty to retreat, such as HB796, are associated with an increase in firearm homicides.² According to the *Journal of Human Resources*, each month approximately 30 to 50 people across the country are killed as a result of Stand Your Ground Laws, as well as a significant increase in firearm injuries resulting in emergency room visits and hospitalizations, putting a greater strain on our hospital systems.³

Proponents testifying in support of HB796 spoke of the importance of senior citizens defending themselves with this bill. Under current law, if a person is unable to retreat due to age, gender, or able-body, they have no duty to retreat before using force in self-defense or defense of another. Statements such as above are only adding to the ongoing theme of this bill: a solution without a problem. As the research previously cited shows, this solution without a problem is dangerous, likely resulting in more deaths by guns in our state. The murder rate is up 27% in Ohio this year, with many communities experiencing record high numbers of gun deaths. Doesn't a bill with such serious ramifications deserve more time for consideration than a few rushed weeks at the end of legislative term?

¹ Webster, Daniel W., et al. “Epidemiologic Evidence to Guide the Understanding and Prevention of Gun Violence.” *Epidemiologic Reviews*, 2016, p. mxv018., doi:10.1093/epirev/mxv018.

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

³ McClellan, Chandler, and Erdal Tekin. “Stand Your Ground Laws, Homicides, and Injuries.” 2012, doi:10.3386/w18187.

Simply put, I urge you to follow the data. What makes people feel safer, such as a Stand Your Ground bill, is not actually what makes people safe when more Ohio lives are lost. Stand Your Ground laws, such as HB796, are a danger to Ohioans. I ask you to consider my testimony and vote no on this dangerous bill. Thank you again for this opportunity to testify.

I am happy to respond to any questions you may have.