

Civil Justice Committee  
Opposition Testimony to HB 796  
12/14/2020

Dear Chairman Hambley and Committee Members,

I am writing in regards to HB 796. My name is Lorrie Levensgood. I have taught in Ohio schools for 34 years as an intervention specialist. I am deeply distressed by the possibility that the senate might designate Ohio a Stand Your Ground State.

I believe this bill will create the public perception that it is OK to shoot someone just because you “perceived” that they were a threat. In the majority of cases in Florida, the victim who was shot did not even have a weapon. Young people like my students (especially the boys) are often unfairly perceived to be a “threat”. One developmentally delayed young man was shot by a driver who had to brake hard to avoid him when the victim crossed the street. The teen used a profanity and the driver shot the unarmed teen. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident. Congresswoman Lucy McBath’s son (who was black) was shot by a white driver for playing his music too loud. This same situation played out in a different state just last week.

Finally, by creating Stand Your Ground in businesses, you place all Ohioans in more danger as we shop, work and play. It is already nerve wracking to think that someone next to us may be infectious with COVID. Now we will have to live with the increased danger of someone in a store shooting at us or someone near us just because they “felt threatened.” More than 500 Ohioans die from homicide every year. Florida saw a 32% increase in gun homicides after passing Stand Your Ground. This is not the environment we want for Ohio.

Please stop this bill from going any further to protect our children, families and communities.

Thank you,  
Lorrie Levensgood