

**Testimony on House Bill 796**

Civil Justice Committee

Rep. Stephen Hambley, Chair

Submitted by:

Carolina López-Ruiz

To the Chairman of the committee is Civil Justice, Rep. Stephen Hambley, to the members of the Committee,

My name is Carolina López-Ruiz, and I speak as a citizen, a mother of school and college age children, a wife, and a university professor at OSU, where I have taught for 15 years.

I also speak someone who has travelled the world quite a bit, and who is appalled at the political division over guns and gun rights and regulations in our country. We should all strive to achieve a safer, peaceful society for ALL. House Bill 796, the so-called “Stand your Ground” bill does NOTHING to take us in that direction. Ohioans already have self-defense rights. Laws like this are not only unnecessary but immensely dangerous. This is simply a license to kill, be it for the police or private citizens. In a time when the country is torn apart by the persistent problem of violence and repression against minorities, the last thing we need is to implement laws that will encourage senseless attacks on civilians, and which will make more difficult to charge aggressors, who may provoke or misrepresent incidents where innocent people get shot, brutalized, and in many cases killed.

As other witnesses explain in more detail, studies show that states that adopt these sorts of laws open the gates to more gun-induced homicides and injuries: A 2012 study showed that in the 21 states that passed Stand Your Ground laws between 2000 and 2010, not only were gun crimes not reduced but homicides increased by 8% (<http://www.nber.org/papers/w18134.pdf>). In Florida, after Stand Your Ground passed in 2005, firearm homicides increased by 31.6%

(<https://crimeresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/loi160090.pdf>). Moreover, Stand Your Ground laws disproportionately effect people of color:

<https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/23856/412873-Race-Justifiable-Homicide-and-Stand-Your-Ground-Laws.PDF>. As law enforcement witnesses will probably testify (I have heard it in previous hearings) these laws put the burden of proof on the (often dead) shot person, not the shooter (i.e., aggressor), making they make the job of law enforcement and the justice system much more difficult.

Things are bad enough as they are. If any changes are made, as a responsible and caring society we should defend laws that encourage and reward those who manage to avoid violence and aggression, not those who engage in it unless they prove it was absolutely the last resort, as the current law posits, those who diffuse tension, not those who unnecessarily (and intentionally) escalate it and who often take on weaker members of the society, such as women, immigrants, and people of color. We all know who the imagined targets of those who want this bill are. It is not me, a white woman and professor, or you, upper-class legislators. It is, generally, not their fellow white men. Bill 796 does not take us in the direction of peace and equality under the law.

Thank you for allowing my testimony.