

Ranking Member, Rep. Leland,
Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee,

As a citizen of Ohio, I am opposed to HB 381. Research continues to demonstrate that Stand Your Ground laws are not necessary given existing legislation and that they lead to significant negative consequences rather than their intended purpose. Stand Your Ground laws upend traditional self-defense laws, encourage armed vigilantism and give civilians in public places more leeway to shoot than the U.S. military gives soldiers in war zones.ⁱ While the safety and security of Ohioans is of the utmost importance, this Stand Your Ground legislation will likely increase the unnecessary use of firearms and result in more gun violence, gun mortality and gun morbidity.

In 2013, the National Task Force on Stand Your Ground Laws was convened by a group of American Bar Association entities to review and analyze the recently enacted Stand Your Ground laws in multiple states and their impact on public safety and the criminal justice system.ⁱⁱ The national investigation revealed several important findings based on recent empirical studies. Notably, Stand Your Ground states experienced an increase in homicides, multiple states have attempted to repeal or amend Stand Your Ground laws, the application of Stand Your Ground laws is unpredictable, uneven, and results in racial disparities, an individual's right to self-defense was sufficiently protected prior to Stand Your Ground laws, and victims' rights are undermined in states with statutory immunity from criminal prosecution and civil suits related to Stand Your Ground cases.

The RAND Corporation reviewed recent Stand Your Ground related research and concluded there was “moderate” evidence—the second strongest level of evidence—that these laws are associated with an increase in homicides.ⁱⁱⁱ Since publication of RAND's report, at least four additional studies meeting RAND's standards of rigor have reinforced the finding that “stand your ground” laws increase homicides. None of them found that “stand your ground” laws prevent violent crime. No rigorous study has yet determined whether “stand your ground” laws promote legitimate acts of self-defense.

A team of researchers examined the homicide rate in Florida before and after stand your ground and, in a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, found that the enactment of this law was associated with a dramatic increase in both overall homicides and gun-related homicides in the state.^{iv} After controlling for other factors and comparing the homicide rates with trends in other states, the researchers determined that the monthly gun murder rate in the state increased 31.6 percent after the law was enacted, while the monthly overall murder rate increased 24.4 percent. Not only has Florida's stand your ground law increased the state's gun-related murders, but it has also been proven to have a racially disparate impact as applied.

In a recent White Paper posted by GVP, a project created to provide ready access to academic research and high-quality data on gun violence, it was found that a majority of states now have some form of Stand Your Ground Law.^v Findings demonstrated that Stand Your Ground laws increase homicides. The overwhelming majority of academic studies find no deterrence effect on crime. Stand Your Ground laws exacerbate racial discrepancies in whether a homicide is considered justifiable. Most defendants in Stand Your Ground cases had previous criminal records, and many had been previously accused of violent crimes. Lastly, most defendants could have safely retreated from the conflict without utilizing lethal force.

ⁱ Soltz, J. (2012, April 10). George Zimmerman Had More Legal Authority to Kill Than Our Troops Do at War. Think Progress. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/2axdo19>.

ⁱⁱ Lawson, T. F. (2015). *National Task Force On Stand Your Ground Laws: Final Report And Recommendations*. American Bar Association National Task Force on Stand Your Ground Laws; Coalition on Racial and Ethnic Justice.

ⁱⁱⁱ Lopez, G. (2019, September 27). More research finds "stand your ground" laws lead to more homicides. Retrieved January 20, 2020, from <https://www.vox.com/2019/9/27/20887403/stand-your-ground-laws-homicides-crime-self-defense>

^{iv} Parsons, C., & Vargas, E. W. (2018, October 17). The Devastating Impact of Stand Your Ground in Florida. Retrieved from <https://www.americanprogressaction.org/issues/guns-crime/news/2018/10/17/172031/devastating-impact-stand-ground-florida/>

^v White Paper: Stand Your Ground Laws. (2018, July 26). Retrieved January 11, 2020, from <https://www.gvpedia.org/white-paper-stand-ground-laws/>