

To the members of the committee considering HB 381.

I am strongly opposed to HB 381.

Stand Your Ground laws have been highly contested throughout the nation, and for good reason—they disproportionately have a negative impact on people of color, and they increase violence in general. It is shameful to even consider supporting this bill, especially while Ohioans are currently marching for black lives. Stand Your Ground laws give people who kill because of racial bias the “right” to do so (Think of Trayvon Martin and Ahmaud Arbery). This law is dangerous and creates vigilantes, who can commit crimes without accountability.

According to the Urban Institute, in Stand Your Ground cases where both the shooter and victim are white, 11% of the cases are ruled justifiable. When both shooter and victim are black, the rate is 8%. When the shooter is white and the victim is black, the rate of justifiable homicide is 34%. But when the shooter is black and the victim is white, the rate is only 3%.

Not only would Stand Your Ground laws negative impact black Ohioans, but they would likely increase murder rates, like they did in Florida in the decade since enacting the Stand Your Ground self-defense law. Our current self-defense laws still give people the right to protect themselves but recognize that it is always best to avoid killing someone if possible (which is important).

Please do not support the Stand Your Ground law in Ohio. It only encourages the escalation of violence and does nothing to decrease crime. To vote this into law would put your constituents in more danger, especially your black constituents. We need state leaders who stand for racial justice and for the safety of ALL citizens.