Testimony on House Bill 248
Federalism Committee

Submitted by:
Laura Larson

Chair Becker, Vice Chair Stoltzfus, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to HB 248.

November 16, 2020

Representative Becker and members of the committee,

My name is Laura Larson. I am a citizen of Columbus and a registered Ohio voter. My daughter Gadisse attends Indianola Informal K-8 in the Columbus City School district and I teach photography at Ohio University in Athens.

I oppose HB 248 on numerous grounds, but I will speak specifically to my concerns as the white mother of a Black daughter. The bill's Stand Your Ground provision is deeply disturbing to me. The bill would allow business owners to "shoot someone who makes them nervous," removing the duty of the owner to retreat from the premises in a defensive strategy of de-escalation. There is no evidence that supports the effectiveness of these laws. Instead, these laws increase the likelihood of an aggressive encounter and multiplying the effects of criminal violence: death, grievous injury, and the attending long term impact on the health and economic stability of families. Stand Your Grounds laws, like the proposed HB 248, authorizes a shoot first, ask questions later mentality, a mentality that allows for racial bias to bloom and for even the most inexcusable acts of violence to go unpunished.

According to the National Task Force on Stand Your Grounds Laws Report (2015), criminal defense attorney Ed Shohat testified: "minority communities are deathly afraid that Stand Your Ground law sits side-by-side with racial profiling; the ticket to vigilante justice." (33) Psychologists Dr. Jennifer Eberhardt and Professor John Powell note the impact of implicit biases on the efficacy of Stand Your Ground laws: "Dr. Eberhardt explained that Stand Your Ground laws give people broad leeway in determining what constitutes a threat, how to act upon those perceived threats, and how that renders blacks vulnerable." (33)

This summer, our state and this country were sorrowfully awakened to the on-going

epidemic of violence targeting Black citizens. Stand Your Ground Laws disproportionately impact communities of color. The scale of this health crisis will only increase with the passage of HB 248. The bill puts my beautiful and brilliant daughter at a higher risk to become the victim of racially motivated acts of violence. Will my daughter's dreadlocks make a business owner nervous? What if she's cold and has her hood up over her head? I do what I can to keep her safe and to prepare her for the realities of growing up in our society. It's a heartbreaking and enraging part of being a parent. I can't eradicate the racial bias and outright racism that she encounters on a daily basis, but I can speak up against legislation that harms Black citizens and communities. To move forward with a commitment to true freedom for all Ohioans, please vote against HB 248.

Thank you for your consideration.

Laura Larson

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: November 17, 2020

Name: Laura Larson

Are you representing: Yourself _____X_____   Organization _____

Organization (If Applicable):

Position/Title:

Address: 496 Melrose Ave

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Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes __X__   No

Business before the committee

      Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB 248

      Specific Issue:

Are you testifying as a: Proponent _____   Opponent ___X____   Interested Party _____

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes   No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require?

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

I oppose House Bill 248.

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