

Chelsi Rhoades- Membership Lead of Students Demand Action at The Ohio State University

First and foremost, I would like to thank Chairman Coley and all of the Senators that are taking the time to listen to my testimony and allow me to share my point of view on this issue that is so near to my heart. I'm a first-year student at The Ohio State University majoring in public affairs and economics. Unfortunately I have firsthand experience about how gun violence can affect a family and a community. I was born and raised in Dayton, Ohio and spent three years in the College Credit Plus program at Sinclair Community College, which is just a few blocks away from where the shooting in the Oregon District took place. I have also lost two grandparents and one of my uncles to everyday gun violence. These traumatic events have left my family and community in shambles, and we are in need of meaningful reform.

This bill is not the change Ohioans want and need. Stand Your Ground only encourages violence and ultimately harms many families and communities. In fact, in Florida Stand Your Ground cases the person who claimed Stand Your Ground could have retreated to avoid the confrontation 79 percent of the time, and 68 percent of the time, the person killed in these disputes were unarmed¹. These deaths could have been prevented if a Stand Your Ground law had not enabled the shooters to be reckless. Since enacting Stand Your Ground legislation in Florida, there has been a clear increase in firearm injuries and homicides². I understand that citizens need to defend themselves in certain situations, but harming someone with a firearm should be a last resort, and Stand Your Ground does not make that a clear priority. The law already protects everyone's right to self-defense, and the statistics show that Stand Your Ground only harms communities and does not deter crime.

¹Spitzer RJ. Stand your ground makes no sense. New York Times. May 4, 2015.
<https://nyti.ms/2CcMW4y>

² Everytown for Gun Safety. The Inherent Danger of Stand Your Ground Laws. February 8, 2019.
<https://everytownresearch.org/fact-sheet-stand-your-ground/>

We need meaningful reform, not a “Stand Your Ground” law that would only increase gun related deaths. There is simply no substantial evidence that Stand Your Ground would protect innocent citizens. I’m very thankful to be able to voice my opinion, and hope that you will truly take it into consideration when voting on this bill. Ohioans need common-sense gun reform, such as universal background checks and red flag laws, not extreme Stand Your Ground legislation that will ultimately make our communities unsafe.