**Testimony on Senate Bill 237**

**Government Oversight and Reform Committee**

**Submitted by:**

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In my career as a Feeding and Swallowing Specialist at Akron Children’s Hospital, I helped care for a number of children who had been shot. It is frankly, a heartbreaking sight. Every day, 43 American children are shot. In Ohio, as in the nation as a whole, more than 60% of the children who die by gunfire, die from Gun Homicide, usually by being caught in crossfire during domestic shootings or criminal acts. And many of the nearly 40,000 American adults we kill with guns annually are parents so their children endure a lifetime without their mother or father. So I can truly say that I am for any law that will make Ohioans (particularly women and children) safer.

But SB237 WILL NOT. During my time at Akron Children’s I also was a published medical researcher. I know how to read research. And on this issue, the research is clear.

* Stand **Your Ground laws increase gun homicides**. I quote to you this finding from The Rand study as explained in the RAND BLOG, Sept. 12, 2019.

“The RAND review concluded there was “moderate” evidence—the second strongest level of evidence—**that stand your ground laws are associated with an increase in homicides.** 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 that “stand your ground” laws promote legitimate acts of self-defense.”

* In FL when they passed Stand Your Ground, there was a 45 percent **increase in firearm homicide rates among white residents and a** **23 percent increase among Blackresidents.**5
* **Stand Your Ground laws encourage escalated violence in situations that could be defused in other ways.**

 In 79 percent of Florida Stand Your Ground cases, the person who claimed Stand Your Ground could have retreated to avoid the confrontation. **In 68% of cases, the** **person killed in these disputes was unarmed.6**

* **So the dramatic scene that many people see in their heads of an innocent victim reaching into her purse, whipping out her shiny gun and waving it at her attacker or blowing him, away exists more frequently in the movies than in reality.** The truth is that in almost 70% of the Florida cases, the person killed was unarmed person. Nearly 60 percent of those Floridians who claimed Stand Your Ground had been arrested at least once before the day they killed someone. About a third of those defendants had been accused of violent crimes, including assault, battery and robbery.7 So Stand Your Ground more often, provides cover for those who choose to shoot an unarmed victim.
* **SB 237 would upend traditional self-defense law in Ohio and allow a person to shoot to kill in public, even when there is a clear and safe alternative.**

Under current Ohio law, a person can use force, including deadly force, to defend

himself or herself anywhere. When in public, a person cannot use force likely to kill or seriously injure someone if there is a safe way to avoid the danger. But if someone is aggressively approaching you and is clearly threatening to do you bodily harm, you already can pull a gun on him if there’s no safe option to get away.

* I find it ironic that proponents of this bill claim to be concerned about women’s safety. They have stated that “Women need this bill to protect themselves from their abusers.” Yet these proponents tend to be the same people who oppose Red Flag laws. Women can already shoot an intruder or abuser in their home to protect themselves. Wouldn’t it be a lot better if the abuser didn’t possess a gun? If you want to protect women, allow the guns of their abusers to be taken away for a short period of time while it is determined whether the woman is at risk and a final determination can be made.
* So what is this bill really about? Gun Sales. Stocks in all the major gun companies and gun sales have plummeted since President Trump’s election. Despite the vocal gun lobby, Americans are voting with their pocketbooks on this issue. One way the gun industry has tried to shore up its image and increase sales is by promoting small handguns as effective tools for self-protection. This campaign has been especially aimed at female customers.
* Please listen to the research and look at the logic. Stand Your Ground laws will NOT make us safer. They will take us further to the “Old West” mentality of escalated violence and impulsive shootouts. And every time there’s a shooting, the chances are good that an innocent bystander, perhaps a child, will also be shot and the staff at Ohio’s Pediatric Hospitals will have one more tragic victim to try to save.