

Testimony on Senate Bill 383
Senate Government and Oversight Reform Committee

Submitted by: Justin Maxwell

My name is Justin Maxwell, and I am here to express my strongest opposition to SB383, otherwise known as Stand Your Ground.

Where should I begin? I suppose it's necessary for the public record to establish the context in which this hearing is being held. We stand before the committee today nine months into a deadly pandemic that, due to the federal, state, and local government's inaction, and its inept and inadequate response, has resulted in the unnecessary loss of hundreds of thousands of American lives, and is currently at its worst stage, with even worse to come. Yet, this hearing is not being held to address that. Nor, I must note, have the representatives of the supermajority in the state house ever taken up even the most basic health precautions to mitigate the spread of this virus, such as wearing a mask, and have instead chosen to opt into the culture war over mask wearing that was created by the vain, narcissistic, and soon-to-be former president, though if asked about the presidential election results, these same members would most likely deny the reality of that outcome, even still.

It must also be noted that this hearing is being held in the lame duck session after multiple, last second cancellations and reschedulings, which makes it abundantly clear that the supermajority is not only leveraging the chaos induced by the mismanaged pandemic, but also their ability to fiddle with the post-election calendar as they see fit in order to once more attempt to sneak through an immensely unpopular and deadly gun bill.

I know that you understand what you're doing because a similar thing happened over the summer. With the pandemic raging and citizens taking to the streets to call for basic justice and fairness after the lynching of George Floyd, the supermajority convened to not address these crises, but to try to sneak through Stand Your Ground legislation.

So, because I was here then, and listened to the hours of opposition testimony delivered to you by deeply concerned citizens that you're elected to serve, I know that you know the bloody facts, figures, and statistics associated with this bill's implementation. I know you know that when this law has been enacted in other states it has driven up gun deaths, killing Black citizens at a disproportionately higher rate. I know that you know that America already loses 100 people to gun deaths every day. I know that you know this bill is unpopular, and I know that you know there is no credibility whatsoever to the claim that SYG is for, as the proponents say, their protection. We already have self-defense and castle doctrine laws on the books that give plenty of cover for protection. And since I know you know all of that, it is important to instead delve into the motivations that exist for passing a deadly bill such as this.

On the surface, it is easy to point to the influence of the gun lobbies and their money that fills the coffers of elected officials willing to sell their souls and bloody their hands for an extra buck. We can see, too, that the rabid base of the GOP, the supermajority's voters, who are pumped full of rightwing extremist propaganda that scream that their guns will be taken away by the Deep State, demand that only

laws loosening gun safety regulation be passed. These are the enduring motivations. But, as of now, there remains a supermajority of citizens who vehemently oppose laws that increase gun deaths, and many who will submit public opposition testimony to raise objections directly to you. So, what are you to do in order to keep the money flowing and the votes coming, in the face of such fierce and overwhelming public opposition?

Well first, you introduce a flurry of gun bills ranging from arming teachers, to permitless carry, to stand your ground provisions for citizens, businesses, and the Kyle Rittenhouse-wannabes. Will all of these successfully pass? Probably not. At least for now. But it does accomplish a few things: 1. You have tangible efforts to point to when the gun lobbies perform their inspection checks to see what their money's getting them. 2. It keeps your base, who are being primed for civil war through the words of the president, Rush Limbaugh, and Alex Jones, fired up and buying more guns. 3. It wears the energy of the resistance thin. Death to the opposition by paper cuts.

Second, if one of the many bills thrown at the wall does stick, or if the cancelling and rescheduling of hearings seemingly at random helps get one across the goal line, then you have helped move forward one of your imperatives: desensitizing the public to guns. Loose gun laws being successfully passed results in more guns popping up in more places they weren't before, which results in a public forcibly conditioned to the presence of guns. And before you know it, guns are everywhere: in bars, in schools, in malls. The more exposure people have to guns, the more desensitized to them they become, the easier it becomes to pass that next bill.

Finally, and this one always goes unspoken, the more guns allowed in the hands of citizens, the more gun deaths that will inevitably occur, which means more reason for people to buy more guns to "protect themselves". The gun doom loop. A gun law passes, and so more people become desensitized to guns, and so more people who wouldn't have previously been a gun owner now feel it necessary to own one because of the increase in gun deaths, which, of course, resulted from lawmakers passing bills to loosen gun safety laws.

So, in short, we see you. We see what you're doing, and your motivations and incentives are obvious. They are also, however, diametrically opposed to your duties as elected officials, which need I remind you, are to serve and look after the safety and wellbeing of the citizens and residents of this state. So, do your job. Do not move forward with this dangerous bill. Instead, pass gun safety measures like universal background checks and red flag laws. Those are the laws the people want. Those are the laws that will keep people safe. Those are the laws you pass when you take seriously your oath to serve Ohio.

I strongly oppose Stand Your Ground, and I hope that this is the last time I must tell you that.