

Ohio Senate Oversight and Reform Committee  
SB383  
Opposition Testimony

Chair Coley, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig and Committee Members. I am writing to you in opposition of Senate Bill 383 as an extremely concerned citizen and mother. Throughout our summer and fall, thousands of Ohioans marched demanding justice for Black Americans. So I am incredulous to find that there is a Stand Your Ground bill on your agenda as we know it is racist and dangerous to Black Americans in particular. In states that have Stand Your Ground “the homicide is justified 10 times more if the shooter is white and the victim is Black.”<sup>1</sup> It is shameful that today a bill is being heard with this kind of statistic, after Ohioans have very clearly shared with you their feelings about the importance of the treatment of Black lives. In addition, this is a very controversial bill so to put it on the agenda when citizens are discouraged from attending events such as hearings places Ohioans in a problematic, potentially harmful position. I would have been in attendance at this hearing if not for the risk of Covid 19. Particularly since many senators will not mask, increasing the risk of spreading.

You were voted into office to protect and represent constituents but SB 383 will make us all less safe.<sup>2</sup> Rand Corporation reports that “four new studies on stand-your-ground laws provide supportive evidence - our strongest evidence rating - that such laws are associated with an increase in firearm homicides, and moderate evidence - the second highest rating - that they may increase total homicides... stand-your-ground laws are actually making people less safe and more likely to be the victim of a firearm homicide.”<sup>3</sup> This is the exact opposite direction our state needs to be heading. It is bewildering that we are even discussing this when the evidence is so clear about the dangers to all.

“In contrast, states with self-defense provisions but retaining the duty to retreat (as contrasted with SYG’s removal of the duty as long as someone has a “right to be” in the location) showed no statistical increase” in firearm homicides. “The study concluded that the removal of the duty to retreat” is what caused the increase.<sup>4</sup> I teach my children how to handle conflict. I teach them ways to keep themselves safe. And, most

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<sup>1</sup> SYG briefing, Testimony of John Roman, Vol.1, p. 25

<sup>2</sup>Giffords Law Center. (n.d.). "Stand Your Ground" Laws. Retrieved June 09, 2020, from <https://lawcenter.giffords.org/gun-laws/policy-areas/guns-in-public/stand-your-ground-laws/>

<sup>3</sup> Schell, T., & Smart, R. (2020, April 22). New Insights on Gun Policy in America. Retrieved June 09, 2020, from <https://www.rand.org/blog/2020/04/new-insights-on-gun-policy-in-america.html>

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

importantly, I teach them the value of human life. But SB 383 diminishes the value of human life. By removing the duty to retreat, we make it ok to kill someone even if our lives were never at stake. A gut feeling, an irrational fear or a hunch are not reasons to shoot to kill. Is this really what you as lawmakers want to convey to your children and grandchildren? As a parent, I certainly do not.

Over the summer, my eighteen year old son and four friends often camped out in our backyard. They did not use tents and long after dark would quietly talk on our trampoline. I think we can all attest that this pandemic has been a challenging time. One of the few silver linings is that we saw children in neighborhoods doing wholesome activities like playing in yards and riding bikes. I felt the same that my son was spending time outside in my yard with friends. But we don't know all of our neighbors and a horrible thought entered my mind: what if a neighbor mistakenly thought the boys in the backyard were burglars or up to no good. They were walking back and forth in my yard to get to and from the trampoline. It was possible for a neighbor to make a terribly wrong calculation and decide to shoot at them, particularly if they could easily access SYG for defense. These types of accidents happen because Stand Your Ground gives people carte blanche to make bad choices that cost innocent lives without consequences. I truly resent the fact that this is potentially something that mothers across our state may have to add to their list of worries. It is wrong to put mothers in this position and it is wrong to put our children in harm's way when you are aware of what the research concludes.

I ask you to please not allow this bill to move forward. Our lawmakers need to implement laws that keep ALL Ohioans safe and will diminish gun violence. Thank you.