

Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee
Senate Bill 383 Opponent Testimony
December 9, 2020
Elizabeth C. Brown, President Pro Tempore, Columbus City Council

Chair Coley, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 383, a “Stand Your Ground” law that eliminates the duty to retreat prior to utilizing deadly force in Ohio.

This bill is not necessary and it does not make residents of the City of Columbus or Ohio safer. In fact, as has been the case in places where “Stand Your Ground” laws have passed, the elimination of the duty to retreat increases the chances of injury or death by encouraging vigilantism and deadly force in situations where it is not necessary or appropriate.

The circumstances that make people feel unsafe or threatened are completely subjective and prone to personal bias, error, and misunderstanding. The passage of Senate Bill 383 would open up countless scenarios where an individual could unilaterally initiate and escalate a confrontation anywhere in public, claim they feel unsafe or threatened due to the confrontation they started, and use deadly force to take the life of another, all while feeling legally protected from the consequences of their actions by this unnecessary and counterproductive law.

And this is not just a hypothetical scenario. The escalation of mundane situations into deadly shootings happens far too often in this country. Trayvon Martin was unnecessarily pursued and confronted before being shot and killed as he was walking home from the store; Ahmaud Arbery was unnecessarily pursued and confronted before being shot and killed as he was jogging near his home; and Aidan Ellison was unnecessarily approached and confronted as he was listening to music in his car before being shot and killed last month. These are just a few prominent examples of this scenario out of many.

These are the tragic and avoidable outcomes that are made more likely by “Stand Your Ground” laws that encourage the unnecessary initiation, pursuit, or escalation of confrontations rather than simply walking away if you can.

And it is not a coincidence that many of the victims in these shootings are young men of color. Studies consistently show that “Stand Your Ground” laws are rife with racial bias. Given the subjective nature of when and how people feel threatened and the bias this introduces, combined with the legal protection people feel under “Stand Your Ground” laws to escalate confrontations, this racial bias comes as no surprise and yet should have no place in American life.



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Passage of Senate Bill 383 needlessly puts the lives of Columbus residents at risk by promoting aggression, paranoia, and escalation over the common sense principle that we teach in kindergarten; if you feel uncomfortable or unsafe in a situation, you should exit that situation if you can.

Eliminating the duty to retreat in Ohio makes every person in our state less safe except for those who feel emboldened to shoot first and ask questions later.

Please vote against Senate Bill 383.



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