

Testimony on Senate Bill 383
Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Submitted by:
Kathleen McGorray

Chair Coley, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 383.

As an Ohio citizen, a career Ohio educator, and a retired elementary school principal, I urge you to reject SB 383 – and to reject any Stand Your Ground bill.

Throughout my career in education, as my fellow educators and I helped children grow into good citizens, we taught them to think BEFORE they act and to DE-escalate conflicts. Stand Your Ground legislation allows people to escalate conflicts and to act first – to shoot to kill in public, even when there is a clear and safe alternative. Current Ohio self-defense law allows people to defend themselves while defusing violent situations. Stand Your Ground laws encourage escalating violence in situations that could be de-escalated.

My doctorate in Urban Education from Cleveland State University taught me to look to and to critically consider research. The research on Stand Your Ground laws is very clear: There are no studies that show that Stand Your Ground laws deter crime. Instead, states with Stand Your Ground laws do see increases in firearm homicides and injuries. In an average month, 30 people are killed nationwide as a result of Stand Your Ground laws.

As a citizen of a diverse community and a lifelong educator of students of every racial and ethnic background, I strongly oppose Stand Your Ground laws, which disproportionately affect communities of color. According to the American Bar Association, such laws are “unpredictable, uneven, and result in racial disparities” – unacceptable in Ohio in 2020, and at any time.

I implore you to put the safety of your constituents first and to reject HB 383. This legislation would needlessly endanger Ohio lives and move us in the wrong direction. Instead, we need legislation that will work to diminish gun violence in Ohio. Please reject HB 383.

Kathleen McGorray