

Government Oversight and Reform Committee, Ohio Senate
Opponent Testimony, SB 383
Ariel Miller

Chairman Coley, Vice Chair Huffman, and Ranking Member Craig,

I am writing to you as a grandparent, mother, and Christian Sunday School teacher to implore you to stop SB 383 from passing. I also write as a member of a group of Episcopalians working on racial reconciliation throughout the Diocese of Southern Ohio. In a nation traumatized by the killing of Trayvon Martin and Ahmaud Arbery, this Stand Your Ground bill sends a terrifying message to people of color. You are moving it to a vote just weeks after Kyle Rittenhouse was released on \$2 million dollars' bail in Wisconsin after killing two people and wounding a third at a protest.

I want to write to you to describe to you the kinds of people who could be killed through this law, with the killer gaining a new legal defense for his violent act. Let's start with my daughter Claire, the mother of my youngest granddaughter, Grace. In August, 2017, when Grace was three, her mother was a peaceful participant in the protest against the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville. Claire was not far from Heather Heyer when Heather was killed by James Alex Field, who also injured 19 other people as he rammed his car through the crowd. Grace could have lost her mother that day. SB 383 would give a person carrying out a similar act of violence a defense against the charge of murder.

Now consider me and my gentle friends of many faiths. In the last year, I've gone with several other fellow Christian and Jewish grandmas and grandpas to peaceful public rallies outside Cincinnati City Hall and in Columbus to call for gun safety legislation after a series of horrifying events, including the mass shooting in Dayton last year.

Here is who was at those rallies, together with old people like me: high school students from Cincinnati and Wyoming, the community where our church is. Mothers with little kids in strollers. College students from the University of Cincinnati and Mount St. Joseph University. I want you to imagine your niece, your cousin, your aunt, your child in this crowd.

We are living in an extremely volatile moment where our citizens get their news from sources with wildly divergent narratives of what is fact. Kyle Rittenhouse is representative of a group of people who think they should take the law into their own hands. This includes the people who conspired to kidnap Governor Whitmer in Michigan, ready, perhaps, to assassinate her.

Several bills being discussed in the lame duck session will act as accelerant to fire if you pass them. Among them is this bill, which encourages angry people to take arms to peaceful protests and to use them in "self-defense." Visualize the face of someone you love in the path of those bullets, or a car used as a battering ram. Please, please do not pass this bill. Your job is to keep Ohioans safe, not to add to their danger.