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Before I begin, I would like to thank Chairman Becker and the rest of the honorable senators for taking the time to hear my testimony. It is exercises like these that allow people to make their voice heard and uphold the underpinnings of Democracy.

I'm a junior at The Ohio State University and am the Founder and Group Leader of Students Demand Action at The Ohio State University, as well as a Students Demand Action National Advisory Board member. Ohio is my new home and I dedicate my free time to advocating for gun reform that would make Ohio safer for *all*. I am also from Florida — a state that is home to some of the deadliest and most controversial events of gun violence in the nation —and the first state to adopt the notorious Stand Your Ground law.

After the tragic shooting in Dayton that left nine Ohioans dead in 32 seconds, a new renewed call for gun reform emerged. Our leaders insisted they were ready to act, that they were ready to offer more than thoughts and prayers and to start fighting for common-sense gun safety measures that save lives.

Instead of moving forward on policies to make our communities safer that have the support of the majority of Ohioans and lawmakers from **both** sides of the aisle — like background checks in Senate Bill 183, and a red flag policy in Senate Bill 184 — the Ohio Legislature is considering a cacophony of dangerous gun bills, with HB 284 being a pandora's box with **numerous** dangerous components.

While the abomination of a bill that is HB 284 contains several dangerous components, I will be focusing on the aspects that worry me most: the Stand Your Ground for businesses and taking away a public universities' ability to regulate concealed carry.

Since Florida adopted the country's first Stand Your Ground law in 2005, the research has been undeniable - Stand Your Ground laws **do not** deter crime, but instead are associated with an **increase** in firearm homicides and injuries.¹ Florida's Stand Your Ground law is associated with a 32 percent increase in firearm homicide² rates, and in 79 percent of Florida Stand Your Ground claims, the person who invoked the³ Stand Your Ground defense could have retreated to avoid the confrontation. In 68 percent of

¹<https://everytownresearch.org/fact-sheet-stand-your-ground/>

²https://everytownresearch.org/fact-sheet-stand-your-ground/#foot_note_9

³https://everytownresearch.org/fact-sheet-stand-your-ground/#foot_note_14

⁴ those cases, the person killed was *unarmed*. There are heartbreaking stories from across the nation of Stand Your Ground laws leading to escalated violence and ending in a gun death in situations that could have been otherwise defused — more deaths that could have been prevented.

Not only is the law associated with more homicides, but the majority of killers who have avoided murder charges by invoking Stand Your Ground have a history of violence. Staggeringly, nearly 60 percent of those who have invoked Stand Your Ground in Florida had been arrested at least⁵ once before they killed someone. In fact, it has been “those with records of crime and violence — who have benefited most from the controversial legislation,” according to an analysis of Stand Your Ground cases by the Tampa Bay Times.⁶

Studies have also found Stand Your Ground laws to have a **disproportionate** impact on communities of color. Research also shows that when white shooters kill Black victims, the resulting homicides are deemed justifiable 11 times more frequently than when the shooter is Black, and the victim is white.⁷

These statistics are exemplified by the 2012 murder of Trayvon Martin, a Black teenager who was unarmed as he walked through his neighborhood in Sanford, Florida. And although the shooter did not invoke a Stand Your Ground defense during his trial in this case, coverage of the shooting frequently included discussion of the law and Stand Your Ground was discussed⁸ among jurors right before they rendered the shooter “not guilty” - despite a history that included⁹ resisting an officer with violence, being restrained from seeing his former fiancé due to domestic violence, and making at least 46 calls to the police involving black males.¹⁰

Supporters of Stand Your Ground would like us to believe that Stand Your Ground is necessary legal protection for law-abiding Ohioans practicing self-defense. But the law already protects us in cases of self-defense. And the evidence out of Florida couldn't be starker: Stand Your Ground makes our communities less safe and lets dangerous criminals get away with murder.

⁴https://everytownresearch.org/fact-sheet-stand-your-ground/#foot_note_15

⁵https://everytownresearch.org/fact-sheet-stand-your-ground/#foot_note_16

⁶<https://www.tampabay.com/news/courts/criminal/many-killers-who-go-free-with-florida-stand-your-ground-law-have-history/1241378/>

⁷https://everytownresearch.org/fact-sheet-stand-your-ground/#foot_note_6er

⁸<https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2012/03/19/148937626/trayvon-martin-killing-puts-stand-your-ground-law-in-spotlight>

⁹<https://www.miamiherald.com/news/state/florida/trayvon-martin/article1953286.html>

¹⁰<https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/wp/2013/05/28/george-zimmermans-relevant-past/>

Next, let's move onto college campuses. Guns do not belong on college campuses, nor

are they wanted on college campuses: “In surveys conducted in 2013 and 2012, 95% of college presidents and 94% of college faculty indicated they oppose concealed carry on campus.”¹¹ And in a 2012 study of college students, 79 percent said that they would not feel safe if concealed guns were allowed onto their campuses¹². Additionally, if firearms were allowed on college campuses, then their presence would cost schools **millions** of dollars¹³, something that schools already can’t afford, but certainly not now in the middle of a pandemic.

Most striking to me is that this portion of the bill discounts the negative mental health impacts and trauma the presence of guns on campus can trigger for students. As it is, Students already struggle with a plethora of mental health issues: In 2015, a survey found that “Nearly 1 out of 10 undergraduates reported ‘seriously considering attempting suicide’ and 1.4% had attempted suicide in the past 12 months.”¹⁴ Additionally, a Columbia University study found that half of college students in the United States binge drink or abuse illegal or prescription drugs, and nearly a quarter of college students suffer from substance abuse and dependence.¹⁵ Mental health issues have been **heavily exacerbated** by the decrease in human interaction created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The last thing a student who is not in the best state-of-mind needs is access to a firearm -- access which will lead to a higher chance that they will harm themselves or others. Additionally, this portion of the bill is racially insensitive. Already, Black and Brown folx do not feel as safe on-campus when they see an armed police officer due to the trauma and legacy of police brutality and discrimination. Also, as highlighted earlier, the issue of implicit bias means that in any given situation, Black and Brown folx are more likely to be considered a threat when compared to their White counterparts. Do we really want to pass a bill that will threaten the safety of students, especially those most impacted by gun violence?

I urge each representative here today to vote no on this horrible bill before it unleashes far-reaching and negative consequences on Ohioans everywhere.

¹¹ <https://everytownresearch.org/report/guns-on-campus/>

¹² <https://everytownresearch.org/report/guns-on-campus/>

¹³ <https://everytownresearch.org/report/guns-on-campus/>

¹⁴ <https://everytownresearch.org/report/guns-on-campus/>

¹⁵ <https://everytownresearch.org/report/guns-on-campus/>