



Representative Stephanie Howse 11th House District

Good Morning Chairman Coley, Vice Chair Uecker, Ranking Member Schiavoni and members of the Government Oversight and Reform Committee. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present opposition testimony on Sub HB 228.

Sub HB 228, which contains the legislative provision commonly referred to as Stand Your Ground, would increase gun violence in Ohio, not reduce it. It would overturn years of self-defense doctrine, and promote dangerous vigilantism, even in situations where there are safe and public options for retreat. The bill eliminates the requirement that a concealed handgun licensee must carry valid identification when in possession of a concealed handgun. Under current law, a concealed handgun licensee must carry both a valid concealed handgun license and valid identification when in possession of a concealed handgun. There is a lot wrong with the language and framework of this bill as it currently stands.

Studies have shown that this legislation makes communities increasingly dangerous and less safe. According to CNN journalist, Jacqueline Howard, "Compared with white men, black men experienced 27 more firearm homicides per 100,000 people annually nationwide (29.12 for black men vs. 2.1 for white men)." The states with the highest rates of firearm homicide among black men include Missouri, Michigan, Indiana and Illinois, which are also states that reflect the largest disparities between blacks and whites. Furthermore, NCSL states that self-defense laws in at least 22 states including but not limited to Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, provide civil immunity under certain self-defense circumstances. Eliminating the duty to retreat would allow for individuals who feel threatened to exert bodily harm or deadly force, rather than being required to retreat to a safe place.

Not only does Sub HB 228 incorporate Stand Your Ground language, it would eliminate the requirement that public places such as day cares and public or private K-12 school post that weapons are prohibited on their grounds. Furthermore, it would reduce penalties for concealed carry handgun violations, in these very same venues. Reducing the penalties for these type of violations and not clearly posting the weapons prohibition would engender confusion and allow more guns in our public spaces; these changes definitely would not promote responsible gun ownership.

In addition, these Stand Your Ground laws would have an adverse effect on communities of color and increase racial injustice. Research has shown that defendants who invoke stand your ground in fatal altercations and whose victims are people of color are convicted half as often than those whose victims are white. A prime example of how legislation like Sub HB 228 is played out in the real world, is the 2014 fatal shooting of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin. Trayvon Martin's death was legislative justification for murder of an innocent black child. Many people here in the halls of the Ohio General Assembly are very uncomfortable dealing with the realities of race and how are laws systematically dismiss and disregards the everyday realities of what it means to live as a black person or a person of color in America, within Ohio.

Committees:

Aging and Long Term Care, Ranking Member
Community and Family Advancement
Transportation and Public Safety

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Below you will find the demographics of each of the Senate members in the Government Reform and Oversight committee, as provided by the Center for Community Solutions:

- Senate District 3 (Senator Bacon) represents 74.2 whites and 17.7% blacks
- Senate District 4 (Senator Coley) represents 86.2% whites and 7.7% blacks
- Senate District 11 (Senator Brown) represents 68.5 whites and 22.6 blacks
- Senate District 12 (Senator Huffman) 91.9% whites and 4.9% blacks
- Senate District 14 (Senator Uecker) represents 95.4% whites and 1.7% blacks
- Senate District 17 (Senator Peterson) 94.3% whites and 2.6% blacks
- Senate District 19 (Senator Jordan) 81.4% whites and 10% blacks
- Senate District 23 (Senator Skindell) 81.3% whites and 10.3% blacks
- Senate District 27 (Senator Larose) 91.5% whites and 4.3% blacks
- Senate District 33 (Senator Schiavoni) represents 84.9% whites and 11.4% Blacks

In looking at the demographics of your senate districts, I wonder if each of you have taken an opportunity to speak with your black constituents to ask them how Sub HB 228 will affect them and their families. There is no Senate district in Ohio where black Ohioans make up the majority of voices in that district, so I urge each of you to take a step back and try to learn and understand the complexities of what it means to be black in America, black in Ohio. As a legislator, we have as much of a responsibility to the 1.7% of our constituents as we have to the 94.3% of our constituents. Especially, when the facts show that there have been disparate impacts based on race in the implementation of legislation similar to Sub HB 228, which is before you for consideration today.

In an ideal world, I know we all want to legislate in a world where race does not matter and that people are treated equally regardless of their race. Unfortunately, we do not live in an ideal world and race does matter in Ohio and the world we legislate and live in. I strongly oppose Sub HB 228, based on my lived experiences as a 39-year-old black woman in Ohio and the majority of black Ohioans who have lived and/or witnessed the differences criminal justice has on many people of color. I am respectfully asking this committee to vote no on Sub HB 228.

Thank you, Chairman Coley, and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify on Sub HB 228. I will be happy to answer any questions you all may have at this time.

<https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/23/health/gun-deaths-in-men-by-state-study/index.html>

<http://www.ncsl.org/research/civil-and-criminal-justice/self-defense-and-stand-your-ground.aspx>

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