

Testimony on HB 1498
15 February 2021

My name is Cheryl Biller, from Fargo. Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into your deliberations on HB 1498 – I ask that you give this bill a do NOT pass recommendation.

This bill erodes the safety measures in place in existing ND century code that provide for sufficient self-defense measures. This bill would provide justification for anyone to shoot first and ask questions later. A person could claim self defense, even when there was a safe alternative to using deadly force, for any perceived threat to their property under the terms of this bill. This does not make communities safer, rather it creates a wild, wild west atmosphere where an armed citizen could legally play judge, jury, and executioner.

In states where stand your ground laws have been enacted, the rates of homicide go up. Nation-wide, these laws account for 150 more gun deaths each month. There has been an annual increase of 32% in homicides in Florida when a similar law was enacted. Additional data from Florida shows us that 79% of the cases where stand-your-ground was used as a defense, the person could have retreated safely. In 68% of these cases, the person killed was unarmed. Nearly 60% of Floridians claiming self defense using a firearm, had been arrested at least once before they killed someone, and about 1/3rd of those defendants had been accused of violent crimes including assault, battery, and robbery.

ND Century code already has laws in place to provide for self defense of your home and property. This bill changes that law in a way that will result in more North Dakotans dying, more gun violence trauma in our communities, and will not deter crime.

I appreciate your careful deliberation of this bill, and ask you for a DO NOT PASS vote.

Cheryl Biller