

April 5, 2021
Testimony of Kari Breker
AGAINST HB 1498

Dear Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

My name is Kari Breker and I live in West Fargo in District 16. I am testifying today in opposition of HB 1498.

HB 1498 is a traditional Stand Your Ground Bill. This bill removes any responsibility, on the part of a ND resident, from trying to retreat from a situation before using lethal force with a gun - even if they can safely walk away from danger. Bills like these have been PROVEN to increase gun violence and gun deaths and it disproportionately negatively affects people of color. This is essentially the legal justification that Trayvon Martin's killer used to justify his murder. To remind you who Trayvon Martin was - he was an UNARMED 17-year-old black boy from Florida. He was walking back home from a convenience store after buying a drink and some candy with his sweatshirt hood pulled over his head. He was fatally shot by a man named George Zimmerman who reported a "suspicious person" in the neighborhood to 911 dispatch. He reported he had been following Trayvon because he looked like he was "up to no good or he's on drugs or something." He was instructed to not approach the boy, but did anyway and moments later gunshots were heard by neighbors. George claimed "self defense" but there is little evidence to back up that claim as nobody saw what actually happened in the moment. The jury acquitted Zimmerman with the consideration of their Stand Your Ground laws.

We should NEVER make it easier to kill someone when there is an option to leave the situation. Thou shall not kill, right? Some of you may be thinking that this tragedy could never happen to you or anybody you love. I bet you are thinking having laws like Stand Your Ground laws in place ultimately protect you and your family from intruders or people on your property. While I can understand that mindset, there are still laws in place that protect someone who needs to attack in genuine self defense. Our current laws are sufficient. I'm going to share a quick story. I had a friend in college who was newly 21 years old. He had been out at the bars all night, was heavily intoxicated, and at bar close he decided to walk home instead of get into a car. He was so intoxicated that he accidentally walked into an unlocked home that was not his and fell asleep on their couch. The owner found him there, quickly got him out of his home, and thankfully didn't shoot him. Under this law he'd have been legally allowed to shoot and kill this college student who had trespassed into his home. This young man has now grown up to be a very successful business man, father of 3 beautiful children and remains a kind and fun person to be around. Did he deserve to be killed for his mistake as a young college student who made a poor choice when intoxicated? I certainly don't believe so. This could be my child someday and it could be your child or grandchildren as well. Gun violence in North Dakota is increasing and instead of making it legally easier to shoot people, we need to focus more on how to make North Dakota a safer place while also allowing responsible gun ownership. Let's work together to find solutions that work instead of continuing to increase gun violence. Please vote NO on HB 1498.

Sincerely,

Kari Breker
West Fargo, ND 58078