



Kelly Sampson, Senior Policy Counsel  
Before the House Committee on Public Safety, Finance, and Policy  
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Dear Chair Novotny, Vice-Chair Witte and Distinguished Members of the House Committee on Public Safety, Finance, and Policy, on behalf of Brady, I oppose this bill.

Founded in 1974, Brady works to change the law, change the industry, and change culture to free America from gun violence. Our organization today carries the name of Jim Brady, who was shot and severely injured in the assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan. Jim and his wife, Sarah, led the fight to pass federal legislation requiring background checks for gun sales. Brady continues to uphold Jim and Sarah's legacy by uniting Americans across the country in the fight to prevent gun violence.

Because some of my dearest family members call Minneapolis home, I've had the privilege of spending frequent time in Minnesota. Although this state's famous lakes, innovative businesses, and epic state fair are all wonderful, it's the people that truly make Minnesota special. That's why we oppose HF 13, because it does nothing to protect Minnesotans. This bill, which says that a person can use deadly force even if that person has a reasonable means to escape a confrontation, is dangerous, ineffective, and unnecessary.

To put a finer point on it, this bill is absurd. It says that a person may use force "regardless of whether a reasonable possibility of retreat to avoid the danger exists." In other words, this bill would empower a person to disregard viable escape options to use force when it is not necessary. Privileging violence over de-escalation, as this bill does, callously disregards human life without offering any additional self-defense benefit..

Indeed, under current Minnesota law, if a person faces a threat and has no reasonable means of escape, they can use reasonable force to defend themselves. That is the law right now and it is sufficient. Indeed, the Minnesota Supreme Court made clear that the logic of this bill is

“unsound.”<sup>1</sup> “In Minnesota,” the court said, “a person does not have an inherent right to stand their ground, and the public policy interests underlying the judicially created duty to retreat when reasonably possible include avoiding potentially deadly confrontations.”<sup>2</sup>

Contrary to popular belief, Stand Your Ground laws upending centuries of self-defense law and interpretation in the courts. [Before the first Stand Your Ground law passed in Florida in 2005](#), it was an individual’s responsibility to attempt to retreat from confrontation before responding using lethal means, like a firearm. Unsurprisingly, removing the duty to retreat has led to more violence.

Evidence shows that Stand Your Ground laws are shown to [increase firearm homicides](#) and [do not prevent crime](#). In fact, a study found that deterrence, burglary, robbery, and aggravated assault are [unaffected by Stand Your Ground laws](#). Likewise, Stand Your Ground laws are associated with significant increases in [homicide rates](#) of 6 to 11%.

To make matters worse, Stand Your Ground laws exist within a broader context of systemic racism and racial injustice that has resulted in the death, injury, and [dehumanization of Black people from the beginning](#) of our nation’s history.

Stand Your Ground laws perpetuate the decades-long brutalization of Black lives while protecting and promoting unjust and unwarranted violence in America. The deep systemic and institutional racism that results in disproportionate rates of [shootings and homicides in communities of color](#) are dramatically worsened by Stand Your Ground laws, which are applied [“unpredictabl\[y\] and uneven\[ly\] and result in racial disparities](#):

- Research shows that in instances where a Black victim is murdered by a white shooter, that shooting is [more likely to be deemed justified](#).
- The odds of a white person killing a black person and it being deemed justified is [281% greater](#) than a white person killing another white person.
- By contrast, when a Black person kills a white person, there is [barely half the odds](#) of the homicide being ruled justifiable relative to when a white person kills another white person.
- No matter the race of the perpetrator, they were [two times more likely to be convicted](#) in a case involving white victims than people of color.

These statistics show how the race of both the perpetrator and the victim are directly tied to the outcome of the case, and whether the shooting is deemed “justified.” And this is exactly what the gun lobby wanted.

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<sup>1</sup> State v. Blevins (Minn. 2024)

<sup>2</sup> Id.

Stand Your Ground laws were championed by [gun rights extremists](#) under the guise of protection, while communities of color have suffered a traumatic history of racially-motivated shootings. They encourage reckless gun owners to kill first, ask questions later, and claim self-defense to avoid being held criminally responsible for taking the life of another individual. To no one's surprise, these laws have perpetuated the victimization of communities of color while white Americans are provided a legal defense for murder — essentially a get of jail for free card.

With rights comes responsibilities. The right to keep and bear arms is not a free for all; it does encompass a right to trigger-happy vigilantism devoid of reason or proportionality. Stand Your Ground laws are an affront to our right not to be shot and we must stand our ground against them. For these reasons, Brady opposes HF 13.

Sincerely,

Kelly Sampson  
Senior Policy Counsel  
The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence