

**Testimony supporting
S.B. 71: Increasing the Penalty for Commercial Sexual Exploitation**

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Thank you, Chair Susan Humpries, Vice Chair Laura Williams, Ranking Minority Member Dan Osman and Members of the Kansas House Judiciary Committee for your service and for reviewing Senate Bill 71.

My name is Lucy Bloom, I serve as the Director of Impact Strategies for Alus Solutions, an organization dedicated to creating and scaling solutions to combat trafficking at the local level. Prior to this position I helped stand up two residential programs for adult survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and served the State of Kansas as Director of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, with a Human Trafficking Initiative being one. In this work I have done extensive review of solutions, looking for those having the most sustainable impact. Addressing human trafficking requires addressing the whole. Addressing traffickers and victims alone is not enough. Including buyers, the demand, in the solution is required for sustainable victory.

- Increasing the Criminal Penalties for Buying Sexual Relations (S.B. 71) elevates the penalty for solicitation of sexual relations to a felony, which demonstrates that the criminality of prostitution lies with those who facilitate and profit from it.
- The sex trade is driven by the demand for sex by buyers. By establishing a felony penalty, this bill can significantly reduce the demand for the sex trade by deterring buyers.
 - 85% of men who might consider buying sex say the risk of arrest is an important influence on their behavior. (Demand Abolition)
- Sexual relations and sex trafficking are inextricably linked, and the harms of the sex trade are numerous.
 - Victims of the sex trade experience extreme violence and severe harms at the hands of buyers including choking, beating, and rape (just to name a few)
 - A peer reviewed research paper in 2018 found that between 53-72% of people in prostitution suffer from Traumatic Brain Injuries.
 - The same study revealed that 91% of those who exit the sex trade suffer from PTSD, which has long lasting mental and physical effects.¹
- KS S.B. 71 also requires individuals convicted of sexual exploitation crimes, including human trafficking and buying sexual relations, to participate in educational/treatment programs.
 - Diversion programs for those convicted of soliciting prostitution, such as the buyer education program “Stopping Sexual Exploitation: a program for men” have been shown to significantly reduce repeat offenses.
- Texas, Montana, Oklahoma, and North Carolina have already made solicitation of prostitution a felony to reduce sex trafficking. Kansas could be the next state to make this important change.

- o Oklahoma made this change in 2024, shortly after receiving an influx of sex buyers after Texas did the same in 2021. This is a natural and practical step for Kansas, which borders Oklahoma and will undoubtedly begin to see an influx of “sex tourism” as a result.
- It passed in the Kansas Senate with unanimous support, and we hope to see the same in the House. Thank you very much for your time and for your service to Kansans.

¹ Farley, Melissa; Banks, Martha E.; Ackerman, Rosalie J.; and Golding, Jacqueline M. (2018) "Screening for Traumatic Brain Injury in Prostituted Women," Dignity: A Journal on Sexual Exploitation and Violence: Vol. 3: Iss. 2, Article 5. DOI: 10.23860/dignity.2018.03.02.05 Available at: <http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/dignity/vol3/iss2/5><http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/dignity/vol3/iss2/5>

S.B. 71: Increasing penalty for commercial sexual exploitation

WHAT DOES S.B. 71 DO?

- Increases criminal penalties and amend laws concerning diversion agreements for buying “sexual relations”
- Requires certain offenders to complete an educational or treatment program regarding commercial sexual exploitation
- Note: This does not include purchasing a person under the age of 18, which has stronger penalties.

HOW WOULD S.B. 71 BENEFIT KANSAS?

- Reduced demand = Reduced harm
92% of women in the sex trade report being subjected to physical violence. (World Without Exploitation)
- The likelihood of arrest is a powerful deterrent.
85% of men who might consider buying sex say the risk of arrest is an important influence on their behavior. (Demand Abolition)
- Documentation will be available at a state level, reducing repeat offense without accountability
- Kansas would be the 5th state in the nation to take this important measure, after Texas, Montana, Oklahoma, and North Carolina

ESTABLISHES MANDATORY EDUCATION PROGRAM ON CSE

- This bill also establishes a diversion program on the first offense that will educate offenders on the harms of commercial sexual exploitation
- Fees from course participation cover cost of program and help to fund victim services

For example, in the Stopping Sexual Exploitation (SSE) program for men, also deployed in Kansas, 96% of participants report they understand the harms of purchasing sex acts and never will again (SSE)

Special note: It would be good to address the term “sexual relations” as it does not adequately represent the victims of this crime.