

Proponent-SB 71
Kim Borchers
Project 2 Restore Board of Directors
Topeka, KS

Chairman Warren, Vice Chair Titus, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to stand as a proponent for SB71. I currently serve on the board of directors for Project 2 Restore, a home for women wanting to leave sex trafficking. Our organization dreams of the impossible daily but does what is possible. Eradicating sex trafficking may seem like an insurmountable challenge, but SB71 represents an essential first step in acting toward making the impossible a reality.

In April 2018, local, state, and federal agencies, in partnership with the Topeka Rescue Mission, united to declare war on human trafficking in our community. Resolutions were passed to combat the businesses, systems, and organizations profiting from trafficking while emphasizing the importance of identifying, addressing, and eliminating situations that enable such exploitation. Now in 2025, we must move forward to begin the hard work of fulfilling the objectives of those resolutions.

Today, you will hear from many dedicated Kansans who are tirelessly working to combat this heinous crime and support the victims of sex trafficking. As has been stated, sex trafficking is a form of human trafficking where individuals are coerced, forced, or manipulated into commercial sex acts against their will. This exploitation often involves threats, violence, deception, or abuse of power. Unfortunately, some oppose this legislation under the pretense that these acts constitute “consensual sex work.”

The term "sex work" was created to put a positive spin on an industry filled with exploitation, including rampant trafficking. This sanitized language obscures the systemic abuse and coercion inherent in the sex trade. By framing acts of violence and exploitation as “work,” it minimizes the gravity of these crimes and grants the industry unwarranted legitimacy.

This reframing creates a dangerous disconnect between perception and reality, allowing trafficking to thrive under the guise of choice and agency. The brokenness caused by sexual slavery is unparalleled. Take, for instance, the story of a young woman rescued from homelessness here in Topeka as shared by the Barry Feaker, former Director of the Topeka Rescue Mission. She was in a near-catatonic state, the result of years of sexual abuse that left her deeply traumatized. Over time, it became evident that the dehumanization she endured had convinced her that her value as a person was measured only by the number of men she could please and the money she could earn for her traffickers.

By legitimizing industries like prostitution, pornography, and stripping, the term "sex work" enables traffickers to operate with less scrutiny and greater impunity. As the National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE) points out, trafficking infiltrates nearly every facet of the commercial sex industry, from street-level prostitution to escort services, online platforms, and

brothels disguised as legitimate businesses. This societal acceptance perpetuated by the term "sex work" fuels the exploitation and suffering of countless individuals.

The language we use matters. Survivors like the young woman rescued from our streets remind us of the human cost of this exploitation and the urgent need for systemic change.

SB71 sends a powerful and clear message to traffickers and those who purchase sex that Kansas is serious about eradicating sex trafficking. This legislation ensures that those who make harmful decisions face significant consequences. SB71 is a critical step in addressing these harms and reinforcing Kansas's commitment to ending sex trafficking.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.