Project 2 Restore

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 71

Presented by Project 2 Restore Founder, Exec. Director on behalf of victims and survivors of sexual trafficking.

Good morning Ladies & Gentleman. -

My name is Angela Boles – I am the founder & Exec Director of a long-term program here in Topeka for women who are victims of sex trafficking. Today I come before you to help you understand why this bill - making the buying of sex a crime - is absolutely vital in the fight against sex trafficking.

EXPLOITING SEX is not a new problem..but one that goes back over 4000 years....in fact – the first mention of it is in Genesis 19 in the bible. The story of Sodom & Gomorrah - When a FATHER (Lot) offers his 2 virgin daughters to a LARGE group of men who came to demand sex from the 2 guests he had in his home. In order to protect the guests, he offered his 2 virgin daughters to the men instead. There may not of been cash...but a deal was being struck.

A few points:

#1 - please dont miss that I said a FATHER was willing to offer (barter away) his daughters to a group of men and says " you can do whatever you wish to them".

#2 – Men – young and old were demanding sex – they intended to RAPE these male guests.

In the bible...the LORD calls this detestable and wicked – it is no different today.

Sex Trafficking today–is the exploitation of the most vulnerable in society. It extorts people who don't know their worth – who have been abused or abandoned in some way. Traffickers make promises that prey on their pain and use shame to control them.

SEX IS NOT A COMMODITY to be bargained away and SOLD for another person's gain , yet today it is a multi-billion dollar industry. 5.7 billion in the USA.

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And please, we cannot confuse sex trafficking with consensual sex between 2 people.

SEX is not a crime – but DEMANDING SEX under the use of FORCE FRAUD or COERCION should be.

When a buyer through use of dollars is PAYING FOR SEX they are entering into unspeakable agreement of COERCION to have their needs met. Worldwide statistics overwhelmingly show that behind then SALE of a sexual act there is a person behind the scenes trafficking this individual.

Buyers just refuse to acknowledge this.

COERCION is (persuading someone to do something they would not do otherwise through FORCE, PRESSSURE, INTIMIDATION, THREATS, BULLYING – all forms of coercion.

Ladies and Gentleman, The CRY OF THE MILLIONS of MEN WOMEN & CHILDREN are far reaching – these victims either have no choice or they believe they have NO CHOICE.

BUYERS HAVE A CHOICE – and guess what, they are not paying attention to the stats that overwhelmingly show that it is a crime with a VICTIM – they just keep buying.

TODAY, you as our elected officials have a choice and we need you to say yes to protecting victims, yes to curbing the demand and yes to giving law enforcement the tools to fight trafficking in our community.

In my years of work with survivors I have heard so many horrific stories and I can tell you that the damage done to these women is life long. They require intense emotional, physical & mental health services and 24/7 care.

99% of the women we have served have complex mental health diagnosis due to trauma of being sexually abused/trafficked.

So, I come to you today on behalf of the victims. Most everyone of the survivors we have served have asked the questions

WHY DIDNT ANYONE SEE ME? WHY DIDNT THEY ASK ..WHO DOES THIS?

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- ☐ I was 7 when it started - my parents needed drug money & money to live on. I escaped at age 23.
- ☐ My grandfather trafficked my mother, my uncle then trafficked me. I was controlled by fear, fear they would kill me or my mom or my dog.
- ☐ I was away from home, needed a place to sleep – a woman offered to help me...and then she started to sell me,
- ☐ My parents were my traffickers – all through high school & college. I never received a dime from anyone– it was all arranged by my family.
- ☐ My husband was my trafficker, I thought I would lose my kids if I told.

Sadly, the reality is that buyers want to believe it is consensual transaction....but rarely ever is it.

VICTIMS RARELY HAVE a CHOICE...buyers do and it is clear that the only way we are going to stop this crime is by making BUYING a FELONY

Please support this bill in its entirety. The education /diversion component is vital to changing the hearts and minds of those who believe that it is a victimless crime to buy sex.