

January 29, 2025

Proponent Testimony on Senate Bill 71
Senate Committee on Judiciary

Written Testimony: Cheri Faunce, CEO

In person Testimony: Kristin Hammer, Community Engagement Coordinator

Organization: YWCA Northeast Kansas

Dear Chairperson Warren, Vice Chairperson Titus, and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Cheri Faunce, and I am the CEO for YWCA Northeast Kansas. Our largest program, the Center for Safety and Empowerment (CSE), was founded in 1977. It provides free and confidential services to people experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and human trafficking in Brown, Jackson, Nemaha, Shawnee, and Wabaunsee Counties.

YWCA Northeast Kansas supports Senate Bill 71, which will increase the penalties for first-time sex buying. Changing this offense from a misdemeanor to a felony, and increasing associated fees, strengthens the deterrent effect and decreases demand.

Every day, YWCA CSE Advocates assist individuals in crisis, helping them meet basic needs, find safety, and access vital resources. From July 2023 to June 2024, we served 104 victim/survivors of human trafficking. The Day Center, a drop-in facility where survivors can access a range of essential services, recently celebrated its fifth anniversary. During that time, it has supported more than 300 trafficking survivors.

Some of the specific supports provided by CSE to people experiencing trafficking include:

- Weather-appropriate clothing and gear, such as gloves, hats, and blankets
- Support groups, counseling, and case management
- Hot meals and weekly Lunch & Chats
- A safe place to rest and build community

Sex trafficking is a harsh reality in our state, and we witness its impact in the communities we serve. While we continue to work directly with victims/survivors harmed by sex trafficking, it is crucial for lawmakers to hold buyers accountable and make our communities safer. Please vote yes on SB 71.

Thank you,

Cheri Faunce
CEO
YWCA Northeast Kansas