

Faron Barr, Rotary Past District Governor Testimony for SB71

SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29TH, 2025

As a representative of 40 Rotary clubs in NE Kansas representing approximately 1,900 Rotarians, I am speaking in favor of SB71. Our district decided to address the cause of eradicating human trafficking in early 2019 once we heard about how prevalent it is in our State. Rotary has seven areas of focus and this cause fits into the Peace and Conflict Resolution area of focus. Since then we have discovered many ways in which our members can be involved with bringing awareness to what human trafficking looks like in our State, helping with victim aid and reintegration, continued education for those who may be in a position to help with reporting, and advocacy for legislation that may help reduce the occurrence of human trafficking.

In 2019, our district partnered with a district in Mumbai, India to provide a grant that funded a Day Center for Human Trafficking Victims through the YWCA in Topeka, KS. My wife volunteers at this day center and sees several victims who come through this facility each week. In the first 2 ½ years this Day Center was open, there were 485 unique victims served. This is just in Topeka alone. This Day Center continues to see a steady stream human trafficking victims every week.

Our district 5710 has been involved in several grants that have brought in funds from a variety of sources to help communities in Topeka, Manhattan, and Kansas City. Through our worldwide network, we have partnered with clubs and districts from India, Taiwan, South Africa, and Panama to bring in approximately \$250,000 of grant funds to help with eradicating human trafficking. One area that has been identified as a very important aspect of preventing human trafficking is reducing the demand for sex buying in Kansas. Increasing the penalty for buying a human being for sex purposes has the potential to greatly reduce the demand for this act. When looking at the statistics of who many of the buyers are, it is evident that a felony on many of these buyers' records could destroy their career, their reputation, and could cause severe family and social problems. With the price of this act increasing in this way, we feel that this would have downward pressure on the demand. Simply, the cost is too high. We also feel that the buyers' education piece of this legislation would be helpful to those people who may not be aware of the severe harm they are causing when they buy a human being.

In 2021, Texas enacted HB1540 which made first time sex buying a felony. Last year, Delaware, Oklahoma, and North Carolina enacted similar laws. We have received information through law enforcement that this has reduced the demand for sex buying in Texas and we would like to see the same result in Kansas. Our District 5710 and District 5680 (south and western Kansas) have partnered on several state-wide projects and I can see this being another area where we could find state-wide Rotarian support. Between the two districts, we represent approximately 4,000 Rotarians. We partnered with the Attorney General's office in 2022 to help with the mandatory human trafficking

hotline posting law enacted in 2021. We feel that SB71 would be another law that could reduce the occurrence of human trafficking in Kansas.

I hope you will support SB71. We feel that this will help reduce the demand for sex buying in Kansas.