

Testimony for the

Kansas House and Senate Committees:

Topic: Senate Bill No. 71
First Time Buying Sex is a Felony

Submitted by Jason Alvis
Chief Executive Officer - ReHope

January 29, 2025

I am submitting my testimony today to support Senate Bill 71.

I'm extremely grateful that the Kansas Senate is discussing human sex trafficking and exploitation. We must address this epidemic in our country and educate people on what this really looks like in Kansas – not what people imagine trafficking is from movies or even media. However, human trafficking cannot be discussed without talking about the people who are creating the demand – men. Without buyers, there would be no demand. Without demand, traffickers find it difficult to make money from selling human beings. Traffickers must find locations where there is demand or they will have to choose to sell something else.

At ReHope, we are humbled for the opportunity to serve both those being trafficked and the buyers caught up in it. We offer an 8-hour diversion course called Stop Sexual Exploitation-KC for men arrested for solicitation. Men that take our course learn about the dangers of buying sex and how their actions are fueling sex trafficking. We provide education on the dangers of pornography and how that is driving their decisions to purchase sex. We also begin to help them deal with other issues in their lives that trigger this type of behavior. Our goal is to provide the starting point for restorative justice for these men and help them make better decisions – for themselves and for their victims moving forward. Too often the victims are exploited and forced to deal with lifelong trauma and societal challenges while the perpetrators receive a “slap on the hand” and perpetuate this cycle with little consequence.

Our class attendees reveal that many men who participate in this activity come from a place of pain and loneliness, fueled by pornography. But that doesn't take away accountability. Accountability and responsibility in today's culture are way too easy for people to ignore. Laws are written in ways that often lead to punishment of the victims of trafficking and exploitation. And the laws do not offer enough consequences and deterrence for men who are purchasing sex. Men can get arrested for solicitation, get issued a citation for misdemeanor, pay a nominal fine and move on with their lives like nothing happened. While getting caught like that might scare men for a few weeks, it does not offer true deterrence. By making it a felony to buy sex, we believe this will target the regular buyers who will not want that crime on their record. This is already happening in Texas under that state's solicitation law (which is a felony punishment). Buyers do not want to take that chance of getting caught. That's what I'm hoping this bill being presented can help generate. Men creating the demand need to face accountability just as much as the traffickers do. I believe this bill will provide deterrence for high frequency buyers – and a chance for healing and accountability for the broken men who are creating the demand; and for the victims they have exploited and broken. Victims seeing and knowing exploiters are

being dealt significant consequences for their egregious actions elevates their mental state and outlook and assists in their recovery. This is restorative justice.