

**Written Testimony in Support of SB 71
Submitted by Neil Getzlow, Proponent**

Home address: 101 S Fairview, Liberty, MO 64068

Organization Represented: ReHope, 7502 Nebraska Ave. Kansas City, KS 66112.

I am submitting my written testimony today in support of Senate Bill 71.

I'm grateful that the Kansas Senate is discussing human sex trafficking and exploitation. We have to address this epidemic in our country and educate people on what this really looks like in Kansas – not what people imagine trafficking is from a movie. I don't think you can talk about human trafficking without talking about the people who are creating the demand. Generally, it's men. And it is men like me. I'm sharing my story because it is time that men take accountability for their actions.

My journey to providing this testimony started when I was 10 years old back in 1980. That's where I first exposed to pornography in what my friends called the Playboy Forest – a wooded area behind my elementary school that we would ride our bikes to and look at ripped up pages of Playboy magazine. My Mom also had two giant stacks of Playboy and Penthouse magazines on either side of her bed. When she would go to work, my pre-teen brain would take over and spend hours looking at that material as a way to combat the loneliness and abandonment I was experiencing as a child. What I didn't realize was that the images I was looking at was transforming my brain. It was programming my views on love, sex, relationships. It taught me how to objectify women. From that first moment I was exposed, it took hold of my heart and wouldn't let go, impacting nearly every relationship I had in high school. But like any addict, soon I needed stronger and stronger medication. My drug of choice was porn. And when that didn't satisfy me, and I had access to more time and money, I started going to adult theaters and strip clubs. Finally, that led me to acting out by searching for women who were selling sex.

I visited women for the better part of my first marriage that ended in divorce. And that addiction continued into my second marriage and very nearly ruined it as well. The overwhelming majority of the women I visited were based in Kansas and Missouri. However, on February 26, 2020 I was out of the state on a business trip. I made an arrangement to meet a woman at her hotel room to pay her for sex. As I was getting ready to leave her hotel room, the second bedroom door opened up and a large gentlemen walked out and showed me his cell phone. It had my wife's contact information on the screen and he announced that I needed to pay him more money or he was going to call my wife. About \$900 later, I got out of that room and went about my day.

But on March 1, 2020, they texted me again and asked for more money. When I refused, they called me wife. Honestly, it was the best thing that could have ever happened to me. Getting my life unmasked set off a wild six weeks where I finally confessed everything – first

to God and then to my wife Amy on April 14, 2020. Thanks to the forgiveness of God, and the forgiveness of Amy, I was given a chance at redemption. While Amy's forgiveness was key to have any chance to rebuild our marriage, it did not take away any accountability and responsibility that I had to show Amy, and my family, that I was getting the help I needed to recover. And that's what I have done. April 13, 2020 was the last day I looked at pornography and the last day I attempted to purchase sex from an exploited woman. It took a lot of work but my life and my marriage have been redeemed and restored. That's why I am sharing my story. I want to make sure that the men creating the demand for trafficked women are more motivated to turn away from that activity.

My story has led me to partner with ReHope to lead men's education. 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 for men arrested for solicitation called Stop Sexual Exploitation-KC. 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 is triggering this type of behavior. Our goal is to provide the starting point for restorative justice for these men and help them make better decisions moving forward.

What we have experienced in our class is that many men who participate in this activity come from a place of pain and loneliness, fueled by pornography. That's exactly what I was able to break free from. 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 they don't 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. We see that happening in Texas from the buyers down there under that state's solicitation law (which is a felony punishment). They don't 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 those high frequency buyers – and a chance for healing and accountability for the broken men who are creating the demand.

I do thank you for the work you are doing, for representing the voices of your constituents, and for allowing me this opportunity to share.