

Testimony for the
Kansas House and Senate Committees:
Topic: Senate Bill No. 71 - proponent
First Time Buying Sex is a Felony
Submitted by Kristy Childs,
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Madam Chair, Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the critical issue of sex trafficking in Kansas. I am writing to share my testimony as both a survivor and a service provider, having lived through this horrific experience long before sex trafficking became the widely recognized atrocity it is today. In 2000, I founded Veronica's Voice to offer support to women whose lives have been ravaged by this societal plague.

Through my work, I've assisted over 10,000 individuals—primarily women and girls, but also some men and boys—ranging in age from 12 to 60, all victims of commercial sexual exploitation. My personal experience, combined with the insights gained from my work, has convinced me that a comprehensive approach is needed to address this issue. One of the most critical, yet often overlooked, solutions is focusing on the demand side of commercial sexual exploitation, prostitution, and sex trafficking. I firmly believe that addressing this demand will bring about the most meaningful change.

Here are some specific proposals for addressing demand:

- **Legislation that imposes significant fines and penalties** on convicted offenders, with the funds directed to support services for victims of sex trafficking and exploitation.
- **Restorative justice programs** through certified offender programs, such as Sex Buyers Class (also known as Sexual Exploitation Education or SSE programs).
- Make **First-Time Buying Sex a Felony**, with diversion for first-time sex buyers to attend a class, and have the charges dismissed with prejudice once the diversion program is completed.
- Require **repeat offenders** to register on the sex offender registry.
- **Mandate DNA collection** from all individuals arrested for sex crimes, as this population is often targeted by violent offenders.
- I also encourage the legislature to consider adopting the **Equality Model**, which decriminalizes victims of sex trafficking while criminalizing the buyers.

While it is crucial to have strict laws to address demand, I also believe in the power of education for offenders. Requiring perpetrators to attend educational programs that explore the root causes of their behavior could reduce the likelihood of reoffending. Studies have shown that such programs significantly lower recidivism rates. Additionally, making purchasing sex a felony on the first offense could motivate offenders to engage more fully with the resources and programs available to help change their behavior.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. Together, we have the opportunity to make a significant difference in the lives of those affected by sex trafficking. Addressing the demand side is a critical step toward lasting change.

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