



Kansas Family Policy Council  
2250 N. Rock Road #118-250  
Wichita, KS 67226  
316-993-3900

Written Testimony supporting HB 2054 – The Community Defense Act  
Robert Noland  
Executive Director - Kansas Family Policy Council (KFPC)  
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House Bill 2054 – The Community Defense Act seeks to place common-sense regulation on sexually oriented businesses (SOB's). Currently in Kansas there is very little regulation or oversight of these types of businesses and Kansas Family Policy Council believes that provisions in HB 2054 are needed for many reasons but primarily we see this legislation as being an important component to combatting human sex trafficking in Kansas. In 2010, Attorney General Derek Schmidt launched the Human Trafficking Advisory Board aimed at human trafficking. Already this year, Senate Bill 61 (a bill to combat human trafficking) received favorable support in the Senate and it may soon be considered by the house. We see HB 2054 as complimentary to these efforts already underway to address the problem of human trafficking.

Among the other reforms in HB 2054, KFPC believes that setting an age limit on who can enter into an SOB as very important. In an age where our culture sends many mixed and conflicting messages about sex and sexuality, protecting our youth from being further inundated with sexual images and material is an important step. It is remarkable that restrictions on minors entering into SOB's do not exist in Kansas giving sex-trade "entrepreneurs" an open door for recruitment and victimization of young, vulnerable and confused children.

Human sex trafficking has become a prominent issue in recent years and unfortunately, Kansas lies at a geographic crossroad in the sex trade. Kansas has taken on the task of combatting the problem of human trafficking in a number of ways both locally and at the state level. Because HB 2054 includes age restrictions related to SOB's, KFPC believes that this legislation could further help in addressing the travesty of human trafficking.

Authorities have found young women from Kansas in the sex trade all across the nation and the Wichita Anti-Sexual Exploitation Roundtable for Community Action has noted that the FBI considers Wichita to be one of the top cities for the origination of sex trafficking<sup>1</sup>. It is a problem that needs to be addressed at all levels and regulating SOB's should be a part of the solution. The Wichita Eagle has reported that the Wichita-Sedgwick County Exploited and Missing Children Unit views strip clubs/SOB's as part of the sex trafficking problem in Kansas. They report that pimps from other states have been known to frequent strip clubs looking for recruits – once they have found a target; they lure impressionable young girls with clothes or jewelry or money into the sex trade<sup>1</sup>. This is of particular importance considering that strip clubs often host “amateur night” events where girls of any age can perform, often competing for cash prizes. Because there is no current regulation providing an age requirement for strip clubs, girls aged 14, 15 or younger could be present and performing. This gives opportunistic predators an open door to entice and transport young girls across the nation selling them for sex. A secondary concern related to the age restrictions is that alcohol is often present in strip clubs where predators can use alcohol to further compromise children.

What starts in a Kansas strip club could literally take a young child to any number of major cities across the nation to be used over and over again. Many times a young girl will be “sold” to other pimps in other cities.

KFPC realizes human sex trafficking has many intricate and complicated components and children who become wrapped up in the sex trade do not all necessarily become ensnared as a result of SOB's. It is very easy to recognize the clear lines connecting how some do in fact become involved and trapped because of SOB's.

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<sup>1</sup> Wichita Eagle – “Wichita a key spot for rescuing kids in sex trade” September 17, 2011.

HB 2054 has many other important regulatory components which we believe to be positive and helpful in changing how our culture views sex and sexuality including restricting the premises to be at least 1,000 feet from locations where children are present such as schools, day-care centers, libraries and parks. We feel that one of the most important components is the age restrictions included in the legislation. We support the bill for many reasons, this being the most important.

Reports indicate that on average, most children entering into the sex trade do so between the ages of 12 and 14. Since we know that Kansas is a target for pimps and human traffickers who target strip clubs and other SOB's for victims, we believe that this legislation will add an important regulatory component to the ongoing fight to combat a crime that victimizes children.

KFPC encourages the Committee to support HB 2054.

