



**OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF KANSAS
Michael F. Kagay, District Attorney**

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONS AND JUVENILE JUSTICE

TESTIMONY OF DISTRICT ATTORNEY MIKE KAGAY

IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 2274

February 24, 2021

Chairman Jennings and Members of the Committee:

My name is Mike Kagay. I serve Shawnee County in the role of District Attorney. I appear before you today to advocate for the merits of HB 2274. I unequivocally support this bill, for the reasons I will share with you today. Thank you for affording me the opportunity to do so.

Human Trafficking is a growing “business.” The International Labor Organization estimates that there are 25 million victims of this crime around the world today. The profits worldwide exceed \$150 billion annually, and continue to increase.

In 2018, the Kansas Legislature declared war on the systems of human trafficking. Later that year, Topeka and Shawnee County leaders did the same. What have we done since that time? We have been fighting human trafficking, but with one hand behind our back. Locally, we have made significant progress in raising public awareness, providing new victim services, and ensuring the traffickers are held accountable for their actions. These are strategies that affect the “supply” side of this equation. We have done little to decrease demand. HB 2274 will remedy that shortcoming.

The average age for a girl to be trafficked for the first time is 14 years old. These girls are predominantly from impoverished backgrounds, and are initially trafficked by a family member or a significant other. The buyers of course, don’t know this or care to understand it. 25% of those buyers purchase sex so often that they account for 75% of the demand. This same 25% has disposable income and is much more likely to earn six figure salaries. The current penalty is not an effective deterrent to this population. In my experience as a prosecutor, a felony certainly would be. Not only would this serve to decrease the demand, it would also provide additional leverage when investigating and prosecuting the traffickers themselves.

Thank you for your time, and for your consideration of this bill. I will be happy to stand for any questions.