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Testimony before the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

Senator André Jacque

March 28, 2023

Chairman Wanggaard and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify as the author in support of Senate Bill 73, the Human Trafficking Prevention Act. This legislation, modeled after current law in the states of Florida and Washington, attacks the growing scourge of human trafficking in Wisconsin by imposing a mandatory \$5,000 surcharge on individuals convicted of patronizing/soliciting prostitutes or keeping a place of prostitution.

This change has been suggested by investigators, prosecutors and victims' support and advocacy groups as a means to address present penalties for soliciting prostitution which provide an insufficient deterrent, citing a high incidence of repeat solicitation offenses by many individuals with enough disposable income to quietly pay existing fines. As noted by the California Attorney General, gangs and other criminal enterprises have learned that the sex trade and prostitution provide higher profits with a lower penal and detection risk than drug or weapons trafficking.

This proposal has passed committees in both legislative chambers on a unanimous or broad bipartisan basis several times, including the 2019-'20 session, when it passed the full State Senate on a 32-0 vote. Gov. Evers publicly indicated his support for the identical bill in a prior session in a letter to the legislature.

This legislation has been formally supported by the Badger State Sheriffs Association, Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association, Wisconsin Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriff's Association, Eye Heart World, United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS), Lutheran Office of Public Policy, HOPELINE, the City of Milwaukee, and Children's Hospital of Wisconsin.

The federal government acknowledges the link between prostitution and trafficking in women and children as a form of modern day slavery. Unfortunately, Wisconsin has become known as a major human trafficking hotspot within the Midwest, with known cases in all 72 counties and growing concern for its spread along interstate highways.

As in Florida and Washington (which have been recognized by the Polaris Project for utilizing best practices in the fight against human trafficking), Senate Bill 73 would similarly create in Wisconsin an additional \$5,000 surcharge for violations of patronizing prostitutes, soliciting prostitutes, pandering, and keeping a place of prostitution, and equally split the proceeds of the surcharge to increase the appropriations for Internet Crimes Against Children task forces and services for Sex Trafficking Victims (Wis. Stats. 20.437 (1) (e)). Demand for prostitution drives human trafficking and a wide variety of societal costs, and increasing the civil penalty will significantly enhance deterrence while funding important victim services and enforcement efforts.

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 73. I'm happy to answer any questions.

TY BODDEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 59TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony on Senate Bill 73

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

Tuesday March 28, 2023

Thank you, Chairman Wanggaard, Vice-Chairman Jacque, and members of the Judiciary and Public Safety Committee for the opportunity to testify in favor of Senate Bill 73.

This proposal was brought to my attention by fellow colleagues shortly after being sworn in. I discussed this legislation with an active anti-human trafficking group in my district and they are excited to see this bill being reintroduced this session. You may be familiar with this legislation as this bill passed committees in both legislative chambers on a unanimous or broad bi-partisan bases several times, including the 2019-2020 session, when it passed the full State Senate on a 32-0 vote. SB 73 will create a \$5,000.00 surcharge to be imposed on persons who are convicted of patronizing or soliciting prostitutes, pandering, or keeping a place of prostitution. Under this bill the surcharge amounts collected are used for much needed treatment and services for sex-trafficking victims and for criminal investigative operations and law enforcement relating to internet crimes against children.

Human Trafficking poses a significant threat to our children. It affects inner cities, the counties I represent, which are home to major interstate highways along known trafficking corridors, and to the rest of the state of Wisconsin. A growing demand for prostitution has driven human trafficking to grow right here in our state. These monsters have capitalized on our weak laws to enslave many innocent human beings into a life of forced sexual acts.

Passing this bill will increase the civil penalty and significantly dissuade these predators while also funding pivotal victim services and enforcement efforts. This is not a partisan issue, this is a common sense issue that we should all support. I pray this bill has earned your support.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration of this bill.



JANEL BRANDTJEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 22ND ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Good Morning/Afternoon,

Let me begin by saying thank you to Chairman Wanggaard and the members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety for holding this hearing today on SB 73, regarding sexual slavery through coercion and intimidation and the sexual exploitation of children.

The human trafficking and sex slavery industry in the United States is a growing concern for all of us. The use of drugs, violence and fear to trap the most vulnerable women (and men) into these horrible situations is becoming more common and more profitable. Recently, there have been several news stories of women being brought into this country under false promises and are then led into a life of prostitution. Young people are terrorized with threats of retaliation on their families and young children are lead into slavery without their families having any idea what has happened. The exploitation of children is something no civilized society should allow. To rob our children of their childhood innocence for profit or pleasure, using blackmail, is certainly something we can work together to stop.

Regrettably, Wisconsin has been receiving much attention in the past few years regarding this issue. Even though Milwaukee has been called a "hub" for this horrific activity, human trafficking rings have been exposed all across the state.

This bill would simply add a surcharge of \$5000 for those seeking to patronize a prostitute, pandering, or operating a place of prostitution. Half of the money would be used for treatment and services for sex-trafficking victims and the other half for criminal investigative operations and law enforcement relating to internet crimes against children. Both of these programs have served Wisconsin well and will benefit greatly from the additional funding.

The bill is supported by the United Migrant Opportunity Service (UMOS), the City of Milwaukee and the Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address this issue.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Janel Brandtjen". The signature is stylized and fluid, with a large loop at the end.

State Representative Janel Brandtjen