



WISCONSIN STATE SENATE

DAN KNODL

STATE SENATOR • 8TH DISTRICT

Senate Bill 941

Public Testimony

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

February 6, 2024

Thank you Chairman Wanggaard and members for holding this hearing on Senate Bill 941.

Millions of people are the victims of human trafficking worldwide, and Wisconsin is not immune to this crisis. This bill was born out of the Speaker's Task Force on Human Trafficking, and I believe it is one of the most important to truly addressing the root problem. That is because one of the biggest sources of demand for trafficked individuals is prostitution.

This bill aims to address this by increasing penalties for solicitation. Doing so will deter would-be offenders, disrupt the demand that fuels a significant portion of human trafficking activity, and ultimately protect vulnerable populations from exploitation.

First, this bill increases the penalty for soliciting prostitution from an individual who is at least the age of 18 from a Class H to a Class G felony. It also introduces mandatory minimums, scaled based on the number of convictions for solicitation. It is important to note that these can be reduced in certain cases through the completion of a court-approved treatment and education program.

Secondly, these changes will be promoted on a human trafficking poster designed by the Wisconsin Department of Justice, thereby enhancing public awareness about the severe consequences of engaging in such criminal activities.

I'd like to thank the members of the Speaker's Task Force on Human Trafficking, and especially Representative Gundrum, for their work on this issue. Thank you for your time, and we would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



RICK GUNDRUM

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 58TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony on Senate Bill 941

Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety | February 6, 2024 |
Room 411 South

Chair Wanggaard, Vice-Chair Jacque, and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety, thank you for holding a public hearing on Senate Bill 941. This bill comes out of the Speaker's Task Force on Human Trafficking. Since the National Human Trafficking Hotline was created in 2007, there have been 796 cases of human trafficking and 1,640 victims were identified in these cases.

In order to help counter the epidemic of human trafficking in Wisconsin, I have introduced legislation with Senator Dan Knodl to increase penalties for solicitation for prostitution. Currently, a person who intentionally solicits a person who is at least 18 to practice prostitution or establishes a person who is at least 18 in a place of prostitution is guilty of a Class H felony. This bill raises that penalty to a Class G felony. Under a bifurcated sentence, the maximum term of confinement in prison is five years followed by a maximum term of extended supervision of five years.

Additionally, this bill includes a mandatory minimum code of confinement in prison. That minimum term depends on the number of convictions for solicitation that the person has. We have also included the opportunity for the person to complete a treatment and education program approved by the court. The mandatory minimums are as follows:

- For a first offense, the mandatory minimum is either 6 months or, if the person completes the program, 3 months.
- For a second offense, the mandatory minimum is either 12 months or, if the offense follows the completion of the program, 9 months.
- For a third offense, the mandatory minimum is 2 years.
- For a fourth or subsequent offense, the mandatory minimum is 3 years.

Additionally, we hope to educate the public of these penalties by including them in a human trafficking poster designed by the Wisconsin Department of Justice. Last week this bill passed on a bipartisan vote out of the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. I want to thank the committee again for having a public hearing today and I am happy to take questions.