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**Committees**  
Education—*Ranking Member*  
Armed Services, Veterans Affairs,  
Public Safety  
Ways and Means

## **REPRESENTATIVE TERESA M. FEDOR**

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January 30, 2018

### **House Bill 461: Protect Trafficked Minors Act**

### **Sponsor Testimony**

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Rezabek, Ranking Member Celebrezze, and my esteemed colleagues on the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for giving Representative Galonski and me the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 461, the Protect Trafficked Minors Act.

It is time to protect all minors in Ohio who are victims of human trafficking.

Human trafficking is a gruesome and pervasive crime that victimizes the most vulnerable members of society. In the fight for justice, we are leaving a gap in punishment for traffickers who exploit minors. Currently in Ohio, it is more difficult for state prosecutors to convict offenders who traffic minors age sixteen and seventeen. If a victim is fifteen or younger, prosecutors do not have to prove compulsion. This bill ensures that prosecutors do not have an undue burden to prove compulsion when the minor victim is sixteen or seventeen years old.

The Protect Trafficked Minors Act changes the Ohio Revised Code to mirror federal level penalties in regards to trafficking. The provision will change Section 2906.32 to include minors up to eighteen and bring Ohio law in line with federal law.

Ohio must protect all minors and prosecute anyone who traffics them. Since passing the Safe Harbor Act in 2012, I have heard from law enforcement that many traffickers are not receiving penalties equal to their crimes. This bill will take the arbitrary burden off prosecutors to prove that sixteen and seventeen year olds were compelled into trafficking. The age of a minor victim of trafficking should not be a factor during sentencing of an offender.

House Bill 461 mirrors federal level law as it relates to minors. In other words, the Protect Trafficked Minors Act provides prosecutors every tool to protect our children and prosecute offenders to the highest degree. We must put children who are victims of trafficking first. A victim-centered approach in our criminal justice process provides support to victims, minimizes trauma, empowers victims to participate in the process, and lowers the probability of victims returning to trafficking.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important bill. We are happy to now take questions from the committee.