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Civil Justice  
Criminal Justice  
Education and Career Readiness

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**State Representative**

Sponsor Testimony: House Bill 461  
January 29, 2018

Chairman Manning, Vice Chairman Rezabek, Ranking Member Celebrezze and my colleagues of the House Criminal Justice Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to be able to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 461.

House Bill 461 serves to protect children who are survivors of human trafficking by ensuring that those who are ages 16 and 17 are given the same protections as minors under 16. Currently in Ohio law if an offender traffics a minor who is 16 or 17, the penalties are inconsistent with the penalties for trafficking a minor under age 16. House Bill 461 aims to streamline those penalties so that all survivors 17 and under have equal protection. This bill further ensures that their cases are handled in such a way that is mindful of them being trafficked.

Human trafficking is not just on the rise in this country, but also in this state. Looking towards the 2016 data from The National Human Trafficking Hotline database, in Ohio alone there have been 277 reported cases of sex trafficking and 42 reported cases of labor trafficking. Moreover, one in four of those cases involved a juvenile<sup>1</sup>.

One case of human trafficking is too many. We need to be proactive in supporting the survivors and punishing the perpetrators. Although there is still much work to be done, a sensible first step is to protect the children who are subjected to these horrors. This is not a partisan issue; this is a narrow recodification that puts the justice system on the side of the minor rather than the offender.

Recently we heard from survivors and experts as they expressed the importance of ending human trafficking during the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Human Trafficking Awareness Day here at the Statehouse. After thorough analysis, the conclusion was that our legislature should be doing more to protect its citizens. Our constituents have spoken and this is the first step to producing the effective change they have asked from us.

Chairman Manning, Vice Chairman Rezabek, Ranking Member Celebrezze, and the rest of the House Criminal Justice Committee, again I thank you for allowing me to offer sponsor testimony for House Bill 461. Thank you for your time and I am willing to answer any questions you may have.

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson, A. (2017, January 31). Report shows human trafficking on rise in Ohio, nationally. *The Columbus Dispatch*. Retrieved January 19, 2018, from <http://www.dispatch.com/news/20170131/report-shows-human-trafficking-on-rise-in-ohio-nationally>