



To: Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee

Chairman Kevin Bacon
Vice Chair Matt Dolan
Ranking Minority Member Cecil Thomas
Rep. William P. Coley, II
Rep. John Eklund

Rep. Matt Huffman
Rep. Peggy Lehner
Rep. Sean O'Brien
Rep. Scott Oelslager
Rep. Michael J. Skindell

From: Jennifer Kempton, Founder and Director of Survivor's Ink

Date: February 14, 2017

Re: In Support of Senate Bill 4

Good Morning, Chairman Bacon, Vice Chair Dolan, Ranking Minority Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. I am grateful for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony for S.B.4. As a representative of our mission, survivors of human trafficking and as a survivor myself, I ask that you support this bill to make the necessary strides in the fight against human trafficking and to offer proper support of its victims.

Let me begin by, offering a bit of information on who we are and what we do. Survivor's Ink is a survivor-led organization that helps victims and survivors of human trafficking. Our primary mission is to cover branding tattoos and scars which victims receive while they are being trafficked so that they can move on with their lives without the constant reminders of their past. However, we also conduct street outreach to provide aid to current victims, as well as resource connection, advocacy, and mentorship to survivors. In addition, we offer victim identification and prevention education through the voice and unique perspective of a survivor. We are here today because, as our mantra states, "As long as Survivor's Ink is in existence, we will fight against human trafficking and for the proper treatment and care of its victims."

Thankfully, there are other proponents to this bill that have or will educate you on the statistics and prevalence of human trafficking and how this bill will technically assist its victims and survivors. We seek to take our main mission, breaking the psychological chains of enslavement by removing or covering the marks of violence that are constant reminders of the past, one step further by supporting this initiative to offer survivors the physical means towards true freedom and restoration.

Our purpose in supporting this bill is to give a voice to the survivors we serve. In my career I have had multiple discussions with many survivors that have aired their frustrations with the current laws. To that end, two of those survivors chose to voice their feelings regarding this issue:

“Hello, my name is Sabrina Briggs and I am a 38-year-old woman in recovery from multiple things. I suffer from drug addiction but have been clean 17 months. During this time I have realized that due to my addiction and violent, controlling, and unhealthy relationships I was in (human trafficking), I have really made some bad choices and honestly feel my past is holding me back from the person I am trying so hard to be! My arrest record is everything I'm not. I hope that expungement will be considered for those of us that can prove we would have never committed those crimes had we not been under the influence of drugs or pressure from a violent man. I begin college next month but could see so many doors opening for me if this were granted.”

“My name is Lyndzy Donovan and I'm briefly going explain why not being able to get my felonies expunged from my record has interfered with living a sober honest life today. In the past five years I've had to work ten times harder than most to get where I am today. I had to prove myself to get into a good cosmetology school, had to jump through hoops, get many referral letters saying I'm not a bad person today and had to wait six months to finally be approved. While in school I searched hard to get an internship before graduating to get my foot in the door with an upscale salon. Had I not, they wouldn't know the person I am today, and with five felonies on my record, no one would've given me the time of day. Finding housing has been extremely difficult. Although today I've got a small apartment, in a couple years I'm planning on buying a house, but with my background this sometimes seems almost impossible. As I've done some research on this already, many places won't deal with me after discovering my background, and this has me fearful and almost discouraged. Back to the job situation, what if down the road this place no longer works out for me, what will I do then? I might have to move out of Columbus, the owner might close - so many “what ifs,” but these are the things I've always have to keep in the back of my mind because it could happen, and then what? I'm no longer that strung-out, law-breaking citizen and have worked hard daily not to be, so why should I have to worry about my past holding me back from my dreams or daily situations? Having my record expunged will open doors to a better future for me, and I would be truly grateful if it could be.”

Finally, as a survivor, I would like to share my personal thoughts. I am a 34-year-old survivor of sex trafficking. I was granted the current human trafficking expungement which removed my prostitution, loitering, and soliciting charges since the court deemed me a victim at the time they were committed. However, I have several drug charges and a theft charge remaining on my record. The drug charges came because drugs were the only coping mechanism I knew to deal with the trauma I was enduring in my life. The theft charge was from stealing two pairs of underwear from Sears because I had literally nothing. Now, I am the founder of an organization that has had nationwide recognition, as well as winning the Ohio Liberators Award and a proclamation from the US Senate thanking us for the direct services we provide for survivors. I am the founder and executive director of this rapidly growing organization which was built from

the ground up. I am also a trusted educator, advocate, and motivational speaker, among other things. However, despite what I have proven myself to be fully capable of, I wouldn't be able to walk into McDonald's and get a job running the cash register because my record says I'm a thieving drug addict. The expansion of the expungement law would not only enable me to do more, but provide a brighter future for me and my organization.

We are not alone. There are so many other survivors who have charges that come with a life of being trafficked. Enslaved victims of human trafficking are forced to do many illegal acts outside of the current environment law just to survive. Granting this bill will enable me and so many others the chance at a promising future despite our horrific pasts.

CONCLUSION

Senate Bill 4 offers survivors of human trafficking a promise for our future. In our own words, you have witnessed the relief this measure would procure. I urge you to remember our stories and to acknowledge the countless people you can help, as well as the numerous possibilities that would be obtainable in our lives due to this measure.

Thank you,

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