



**State Representative Cindy Abrams**  
**State Representative Rick Carfagna**  
*Sponsor Testimony - House Bill 431*  
*House Criminal Justice Committee*  
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*Rep. Cindy Abrams*

Chairman Lang, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland and fellow members of the House Criminal Justice Committee. Thank you for affording us the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 431.

Ohio is currently the fourth worst state for human trafficking in the nation, fueled by an almost unlimited demand for sexual activity for hire. While assigned to the Cincinnati Police Department's Vice Unit, I saw first-hand how this has devastated the lives of many young women who have fallen victim to these pimps and johns. Many of the women I encountered were addicted to drugs, selling themselves for their next high.

It was common for a john to pull up to a known street corner and solicit a prostitute, drive around the corner and commit the sex act, then drop her back off. The scene is almost comparable to a drive-thru open to anyone with a little bit of disposable income. After exposing himself to diseases such as Hepatitis, TB and STD's, the john then goes home to the unsuspecting family, putting them at risk, and faces no consequences. The prostitute, however, is left on the corner to repeat that cycle several times until she meets her quota established by her pimp if she wants enough food and somewhere to sleep and stay alive that night. This is a devastating cycle that needs to be broken.

Under current law, it is not difficult for someone caught soliciting a prostitute to keep that information hidden from friends, family, and their employer. No one accidentally engages in sexual activity for hire. These offenders are aware their conduct is illegal and choose to engage anyway. If we can shine a light on this crime, especially on the individuals enabling it and supplying the demand for it, I believe we can effectuate real change.

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HB 431 takes a different approach to combat human trafficking by focusing on the demand-side of this problem. The legislation creates Ohio's Sexual Exploitation Database, a registry of johns, pimps, and traffickers to be maintained by the Attorney General's office. Under the bill, anyone convicted of or pleading guilty to a prostitution offense will have their conviction record sent by the clerk of courts to the Attorney General. The conviction record will include the offender's full legal name, last known address, color photograph, description of the offense, the date the offense was committed, and the location of where the offense was committed. The Attorney General's office will enter all of this information into the database, where it will remain and be publicly accessible for a period of five years.

After five years has elapsed, the offender will be automatically removed from the registry. Should the offender's conviction or plea of guilty be overturned prior to the expiration of five years, the offender may submit an application to the Attorney General's office to be removed from the database.

Ohioans need a tool to hold each other accountable for crimes committed largely against young women who are trapped in an inescapable chain of poverty, addiction, and violence. We believe having a publicly accessible registry may prove to be the deterrent that keeps someone from engaging in illegal behavior.

Anything we can do to reduce demand and deter this crime are worthy of our consideration, and we look forward to working with you all to advance this idea through the legislative process. In the coming weeks, you can expect to hear and read expert testimony on this proposal from both the Attorney General's office and those on the frontlines in our communities.

Chairman Lang and members of this committee, thank you again for allowing us to provide testimony and at this time, we would be happy to answer any questions.