



# Zach Klein

CITY ATTORNEY

CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE ■ COLUMBUS OHIO

February 12, 2020

The Honorable George F. Lang  
Ohio State Senate  
1 Capitol Square  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Chairman Lang:

I am writing to you today in my capacity as Chief Counsel for Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein - the chief legal officer for the largest city in Ohio and the 14th largest in the country - to express support for Sub. Senate Bill 13. With an ever-growing population now reaching close to 900,000 residents, Columbus enjoys many advantages as a vibrant and thriving urban center, but like any other part of Ohio, we also face our share of challenges. In my years as Chief Prosecutor for the City of Columbus, I had occasion to personally observe one such challenge: the prevalence of human sex trafficking.

From shutting down drug houses and putting illegal operations out of business to advocating for victims of domestic violence and stalking, the City Attorney's Office is dedicated to preserving public safety. That is why from day-one, City Attorney Klein pledged to use the full breadth and scope of the office to prioritize neighborhood safety, promote economic progress, and most importantly, protect the most vulnerable members of our community. Indeed, it is difficult to envision ones more vulnerable and in need of protection than those who the Protect Trafficked Minors Act seeks to protect: 16 and 17 year old children who are victims of human trafficking.

According to the latest data available, Ohio has had the fourth highest number of reported human trafficking cases in the nation for the third straight year.<sup>1</sup> Between 20-25 percent of those cases tragically involve minors. Statistics show that girls between the ages of 12-16 are at the greatest risk of becoming victims of trafficking. It is also widely accepted that once these victims become trapped in the cycle of sex trafficking and drug addiction, it is extremely difficult for them to escape. According to a study by Thoughtwell commissioned on behalf of the City of Columbus:

Women engaged in prostitution have the highest homicide rate of any set of women ever studied. With mortality rates 200 times greater than average, the most common causes of death are homicide, suicide, and substance abuse.

These stark facts illustrate how important it is for all of us to work in a bipartisan fashion to address the startling deficiencies in current Ohio law that Sub. S.B. 13 seeks to remedy.

<sup>1</sup> <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/states>

**Civil Division**  
77 N. Front Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
614-645-7385  
Fax 614-645-6949

**Claims Division**  
77 N. Front Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
614-645-7385  
Fax 614-724-6503

**Prosecutor Division**  
375 S. High Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
614-645-7483  
Fax 614-645-8902

**Real Estate Division**  
77 N. Front Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
614-645-7712  
Fax 614-645-3913

**Police Legal Advisor**  
120 Marconi Blvd.  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
614-645-4530  
Fax 614-645-4551

Prosecutors should not have to face additional barriers in trying to apply the same protections for 16- and 17-year-old victims that are available to other minors in Ohio. The Protect Trafficked Minors Act would also bring our state in line with federal law, affording a wider range of resources and tools for prosecutors and victim advocates.

City Attorney Klein appreciates the Ohio Senate's work in continuing to raise awareness of human trafficking and applauds the Ohio House for considering this new legislation that adds additional protections for victims and holds traffickers accountable. On behalf of City Attorney Klein, I am proud to stand with Senator Teresa Fedor and her co-sponsors in the latest efforts to defend some of the most vulnerable crime victims in our state.

Respectfully,

*/s/ Lara N. Baker-Morrish*

Lara Baker-Morrish  
Chief Counsel  
Deputy City Attorney  
Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein's Office  
77 N. Front St – 4<sup>th</sup> Flr  
Columbus, OH 43215