

**To: The Ohio House of Representatives Criminal Justice Committee**

**From: Officer Nate Young**

**Date: February 12, 2020**

**Re: House Bill 431**

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

My name is Nate Young. I am a law enforcement officer with the Cincinnati Police Department. I am a Police Specialist and have served the citizens of Cincinnati for over 28 years. Nearly 2 decades of my service has been in our Vice Squad or performing Vice related functions in uniform patrol.

The Cincinnati Police Department's Vice Squad is charged with enforcing laws involving Gambling, Liquor, Prostitution, and more recently Human Trafficking.

During my first tour as a Vice officer from 2003 until 2012 our prostitution effort was centered around addressing our "streetwalker" and "escort" population. Undercover officers posing as "John's" or undercover officers posing as prostitutes were the primary response to these two issues. Prostitutes who solicited the undercover officer were taken to jail and "John's" who solicited the undercover officer were taken to jail.

This process was widely accepted across the country by law enforcement agencies as the baseline response to "streetwalker" and "escort" prostitution issues.

Upon leaving Vice in 2012 I returned to uniform patrol in District 1 where it just so happens the city's most notorious "streetwalker" tract resided. The then Captain of District 1, now Colonel Mike John, went to a community meeting where this tract was located. The Colonel was prepared to respond to questions about addressing open air drug dealing, parking issues, vacant buildings, all the "normal" stuff.

What Colonel John got hit with was a ruckus crowd who had their fill of the open-air prostitution market that existed on their street. The citizens were tired of prostitutes loitering on the sidewalk 24/7. The fights and assaults between the prostitutes, the pimps and the "John's". The discarded condoms on the sidewalk where the children waited for their buses and everything that goes with an ineffective cyclical process of arrest, transport and release.

Colonel John asked if I were interested in developing a plan that would address this community's issue. Not feeling like I had much of a choice, I was in the Marine Corps for 4 years, I know what being VOLUN-TOLD feels like, I accepted.

There were big stakes involved here, a new Captain, a fed-up community, and a prostitution tract that has existed in Cincinnati since as long as records of arrests have been kept for our City.

This is where Police Officer Katie Werner comes in to this story. Katie was also in District 1 and on the same relief as myself. I didn't know Katie very well, but I DID know she had an extensive background in problem solving policing. I also knew that the same old arrest, transport, release effort was not going to be effective.

Katie was able to guide me through this problem solving model. There was a planning stage, an action stage, a response stage, I even think there was a stage for when it was lunch time.

I am here to tell you, Problem Solving Based Policing WORKS!

Katie and I were able to analyze and identify multiple contributing factors to how and why a "streetwalker" tract of this size can exist for so long. During this time, Human Trafficking was finally gaining the attention of the media, law enforcement and the public. Katie and I were able to build off of this momentum and pitch an idea of a prostitution specific docket to a municipal Judge, Judge Heather Russell. Judge Russell immediately began developing the court processes and an intensive rehabilitation program through probation. Judge Russell created and presides over what is now C.H.A.N.G.E. Court. The only other prostitution specialty court at this time was Judge Herberts, from here in Franklin County, C.A.T.C.H. Court. Human Trafficking was certainly the platform that kicked in the door to be able to develop and deploy such phenomenal court based programs as C.H.A.N.G.E. Court and C.A.T.C.H. Court.

As I continued to troubleshoot the business of prostitution enforcement, I found myself lost in regards to addressing the demand side of the equation, the "John's". Clearly, with institutions like CHANGE Court and CATCH Court we have provided miraculous opportunities for the victims of Human Trafficking. What we, law enforcement, have failed to do is look at combating the demand side. The "John's" were subjected to the same process as the prostitutes, arrest, transport and release.

Problem solving policing is a data driven mechanism and traditional policing has failed to bring forth usable data to aid in troubleshooting the "John" side of our prostitution problems.

Here's what I can tell you about our victimizers, our "John's".

When Katie and I patrol our prostitution tracts we see and interact with a small number of prostitutes. Some come and go from the fold as they enter rehab, get locked up, move business to another part of the city or move to a different city or sadly die. We have lists of who we expect to see on which tract, who has outstanding warrants, who has health issues etc.. The point is there are a finite number of prostitutes.

What there IS NOT a finite number of is, guys who are trolling for prostitutes and engage in prostitution. In the nearly 2 decades of enforcing prostitution laws in the City of Cincinnati, I have personally only seen a handful of recidivist "John's". Some will argue that the "John" who gets arrested becomes educated on police tactics and therefore can evade enforcement efforts.

My experience tells me that the figurative line of “John’s” extends infinitely in and through our neighborhoods, cities and state.

My number one belief why “John’s” feel so invisible to the law, is because THEY ARE. We focus our efforts on saving the victims, as well we should.

Anonymity is what the “John” is counting on when he chooses to engage in prostitution. The “John” is banking on being able to drive into an area, quickly pick up a prostitute, quickly exit that immediate area, find a spot to victimize the prostitute and return the prostitute to an area all while evading the eye of law enforcement AND people he may know.

There are 2 questions that are asked by the “John’s” when they are arrested.

Number 1 question - “Is my job going to find out?”

Second question – “Will my wife find out?”

Now in my business this is called a clue. There is something to take away from these 2 questions and the take-away is there is a level of humiliation experienced by the “John” when they are finally caught.

Traffickers, also referred to as pimps, are not as likely to experience the level of humiliation as a “John” may. Traffickers, however, absolutely count on operating anonymously. Multiple mechanisms, such as utilizing a second in command known as “bottom bitch”, to transport the victims, rent hotel rooms for the business of prostitution, groom the victims and countless other duties that the pimp charges the “bottom bitch” with in order to remain anonymous. The pimp’s ideal life is to have a “bottom bitch” run the business and ultimately take the fall for the pimp should his criminal enterprise get interrupted by law enforcement.

Pimps are notorious for transporting victims to different cities where he and his operation may not be quite as familiar to those law enforcement agencies. The pimp may have a standard “circuit” of cities that he and his business frequent. Staying on the move and staying anonymous.

These traffickers subject their victims to sexual assaults at their own hands, sexual assaults by the “John’s”, beatings, again by both trafficker and “John”, food and sleep deprivation, overdoses, dose manipulation, psychological assaults and the list can go on about the dehumanizing atrocities perpetrated by both pimps and “John’s”.

Do I believe a statewide list of “John’s” and pimps that is available to law enforcement and the public will be an effective deterrent in addressing the level of anonymity that these victimizers have been experiencing for decades, ABSOLUTELY I DO!

Good on you Ohio and thank you Attorney General Yost for your support.

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