



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
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Testimony on House Bill 461, Protect Trafficked Minors Act
Before the House Criminal Justice Committee
The Honorable Nathan Manning, Chair
By Karen Rainey, LWV Ohio Specialist
May 22, 2018

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Rezabek, and members of the committee:

I am Karen Rainey, a volunteer specialist on human trafficking for the League of Women Voters of Ohio.

The League is a member-driven, grassroots organization that adopts its positions for advocacy through member study and support. Our study of human trafficking led to the adoption of positions that align well with the provisions of the proposed legislation to protect minors.

Specifically, the League believes that all minors who have been commercially sexually exploited or forced into slave labor should be legally considered as victims. While previous legislation has provided for services to enable trafficking victims to reclaim their lives, not all minors are treated equally. Certain compromises were made in previous legislation in order to ensure passage, the most problematic being that 16- and 17-year-olds are not treated in the same way as younger victims. This bill will rectify that situation and bring Ohio's law into agreement with the federal law, which defines all minors under 18 as victims and entitled to the same legal protections.

The hurt that is inflicted on a young person who is trafficked is no less on a sixteen-year-old than a fifteen-year-old. There should be no difference in their treatment.

We respectfully ask that you enact this legislation as quickly as possible.

Thank you for your time.