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Representative Gayle Manning, Chair

Representative Bill Dean, Vice Chair

Representative Michele Lepore-Hagen, Ranking Member

Commerce and Labor Committee

November 17, 2020

Support for HB 374, Revise massage therapy law

Dear Representatives;

Abolition Ohio is the Miami Valley's Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition. Our membership includes over 30 organizations and 200 individuals across southwest Ohio. We work to prevent human trafficking, protect victims and survivors, and assist law enforcement in prosecuting traffickers.

House Bill 374 is needed because it will help reduce commercial sex and human trafficking (both sex and labor trafficking) in the state of Ohio. It will empower unincorporated townships to pass ordinances to regulate massage businesses. Closing the "relaxation massage loophole" will greatly simplify (and reduce the cost) of law enforcement operations to shut down illicit massage businesses.

According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, Illicit Massage/Spa Businesses are the number one venue for sex trafficking in the US. In Ohio, which is #5 in the nation for cases reported to the national hotline, illicit massage/spa businesses are the second most common type of sex trafficking venue reported.

Last year, a massive law enforcement operation raided 13 illicit massage businesses in northeast Ohio as part of a human trafficking investigation. Also, three massage parlors near Columbus were shut down for suspicion of human trafficking and prostitution. Similar raids have been conducted over the past few years in many Ohio cities.

This is a statewide issue. A quick search of commercial sex advertisement and review websites we conducted earlier this year revealed 26 illicit massage/spa businesses in the greater Dayton area alone.

The membership of Abolition Ohio strongly supports passage of Senate Bill 105 because we see it as a common sense way to reduce sex and labor exploitation and trafficking. We urge you to support this bill. I thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,



Anthony "Tony" Talbott, Director