



# ZACH KLEIN

## COLUMBUS CITY ATTORNEY

March 1, 2019

The Honorable John Eklund  
Ohio State Senate  
1 Capitol Square  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Chairman Eklund:

I am writing to you today in my capacity as Columbus City Attorney, the chief legal officer for the largest city in Ohio and the 14<sup>th</sup> largest in the country, to express my wholehearted support for 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.

From shutting down drug houses and putting illegal operations out of business to battling prostitution and leading the way on advocating for victims of domestic violence and stalking, the City Attorney's Office is constantly engaged in matters of public safety. That is why from day-one, I pledged to use the full breadth and scope of my office to prioritize neighborhood safety, promote economic progress, and most importantly, protect the most vulnerable members of our community. I can envision no one more vulnerable and in need of protection than those who the Protect Trafficked Minors Act seeks to protect: any child under the age of 18 who is tragically the victim 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 also 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 that was commissioned on behalf of the City of Columbus when I served as City Council President:

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.

Those stark facts alone 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 S.B. 13 seeks to remedy. 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.

---

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

We appreciate the Ohio Senate continuing to raise awareness of human trafficking and for considering new legislation that adds additional protections for victims and holds traffickers accountable. Serving in Ohio's capital city affords me the unique opportunity to speak up on issues where local and state government priorities intersect. I do not take this responsibility lightly. There are many examples where advocacy on behalf of Columbus residents can have a direct, positive impact on the rest of our state, and *vice versa*.

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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "ZACH KLEIN", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Zach Klein  
Columbus City Attorney  
77 North Front Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215