



**Testimony on Senate Bill 13, Protect Trafficked Minors Act
Before the Senate Judiciary Committee
The Honorable John Eklund, Chair
By Katherine Kuck, Advocate for the American Association of University Women of Ohio**

Chairman Eklund, Vice Chair Manning, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of S.B. 13. I work with AAUW Ohio, a statewide organization whose members see the sad and vexing problem of sex trafficking reported in newspapers throughout the country.

This trafficking of children is a problem right under our noses, whether we live in urban or rural areas, but often the labor or sex trafficking is not recognized by most of us until the local newspaper reports an enforcement and arrest when police raid what often passes as a legitimate business, such as some operations masquerading recently in Central Ohio as massage parlors.

This problem is not specific to Ohio, but we welcome the move to make our state consistent with federal law which affords more children protection. Current Ohio law delineates between 15 and 16 year old children, so that children 16 and 17 years of age are not protected as minors, but instead treated as adults if they are arrested. This law change would give more children in Ohio designation as minors and therefore more protection. This common sense change also makes it easier for law enforcement, enabling them to better protect all those who should be considered minor children.

We see thousands of children pulled into illegal labor and the sex trade with no advocates until they are caught and engaged with the court system, which is a bulwark against further exploitation.

With Senate Bill 13, children through age 17 caught in this illegal web of activities will have a better chance to choose alternative programs and a salvageable future with their record to be expunged later. There will be a road to recovery for all minors under age 18, and law enforcement officers will better be able to become a helpmate to recovery for all minors.

Ohioans will welcome this essential change in the law when they understand the obvious need being addressed. Our association appreciates your attention to this legislation and we hope there will be prompt passage. Thank you.

AAUW advances equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy and research. AAUW, founded in 1881, is open to all graduates who hold an associate or higher degree from a regionally accredited college or university. In principle and practice, AAUW values and seeks a diverse membership.