



AbolitionOhio.org | AbolitionOhio@gmail.com | 937.229.4326

**Keller Hall 453  
300 College Park  
Dayton, OH 45469-1425**

Senator John Eklund, Chair

Senator Nathan H. Manning, Vice Chair

Senator Cecil Thomas, Ranking Member

Judiciary Committee

November 9, 2020

Support for HB 431, Create Sexual Exploitation Database

Dear Senators,

As both a scholar and an advocate, I support the passage of HB 431. In addition to teaching and researching about commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking at the University of Dayton, I co-founded and direct Abolition Ohio, the Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition for the Miami Valley. I also served on both the previous and the current Ohio Attorney General Human Trafficking Commission.

Commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking are businesses. As such, they depend upon both supply and demand. Human beings—mostly women and children—are victimized to meet consumer demand. In order to reduce the exploitation, the demand must be reduced. The way to accomplish this is to increase the consumer's perceived cost in relation to his perceived benefit. These costs may be material or immaterial (e.g., legal, economic, or social costs). HB 431 proposes to institute a state-wide sexual exploitation database ("Johns' database") that may work to reduce demand by increasing the social costs of purchasing commercial sex.

Research conducted by the University of Dayton Human Rights Center on online commercial sex advertisements as well as numerous other academic studies clearly show how demand drives the commercial sex industry. In economic terms, commercial sex has a high "elasticity of demand." In other words, as cost increases, demand decreases at a greater than linear rate. So, even a small increase in cost may have a large impact in reducing demand.

The creation of the sexual exploitation database works on two different levels. First, it is a strong signal that society will no longer tolerate the commercial exploitation of human beings. Purchasing

sex will be seen as being less socially acceptable. This aligns with and strengthens broader cultural shifts about sexual exploitation that increasingly hold men accountable for their sexual misconduct. In addition to this positive social impact, the proposed database also will hold individual exploiters accountable via the threat of shame or social stigmatization that occurs when their names are published.

The implementation of the proposed database will not by itself eliminate commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking, but it is a crucial step along the path to developing a robust demand reduction approach to the issue.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ANT' followed by a stylized flourish.

Anthony "Tony" Talbott

Director