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District 17 & District 35

Sponsor Testimony, H.B. 391 | WRITTEN-ONLY

House Finance Committee | November 15, 2022

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for allowing us to submit written-only sponsor testimony for House Bill 391.

For too long we attacked solicitation by increasing fines and penalties. That hasn't worked. It may be part of the solution, but it is not the only part.

HB 391 would create an anti-solicitation grant program to help local courts either create or expand existing CATCH Courts and Johns Schools.

Columbus and other communities are coming up with innovative programs like CATCH courts and Johns schools that educate and work to prevent human trafficking and solicitation. These innovative programs need to expand and multiply.

Changing Actions to Change Habits (CATCH) courts work with the individual convicted of solicitation. The supply side. They provide housing and food that many have come to get from their trafficker. Participants get treatment for trauma and addiction. If they complete the course they may be eligible to get their records expunged.

CATCH courts work. We have the numbers. The recidivism rate for women convicted of solicitation nationwide is 80%. That number drops by half for women enrolled in CATCH for any amount of time, and even further to 20% for the women who complete the program.

Johns schools work with the purchasers of sex – the johns - the supply. Participants are taught the impact solicitation has on survivors and on themselves. There are sessions on relationships, counseling, and sexually transmitted diseases. The health and legal consequences of engaging in commercial sex, the negative impact of solicitation on victimized women, girls and communities are covered. They also aim to help. Schools cover healthy relationships, anger management, sexual addiction pimping and pandering, human trafficking, and the impact of a criminal record. Graduate of the school may be able get their conviction sealed from their record.

We know the direct connection between opioids and prostitution. As we deal with the devastating impact of opioids on Ohio, we also must have to treat one of its worst side effects –

solicitation and the lost souls of all those involved. HB 391 does that through creating a grant program, administered by the Attorney General, to help fund these local programs.

This grant provides funding today, and as we learn more and scale up, we need to increase the size and scope of current programs and give a helping hand to communities that are facing the same challenges of opioids and increases in solicitation.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today.