

House Homeland Security Committee
House Bill 473 – Proponent Testimony
Carolyn M. Kinkoph, Alliance Against Human Trafficking Co-Founder
Wednesday, June 5, 2024

Chair Ghanbari, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the House Homeland Security Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide proponent testimony for House Bill 473, legislation requiring security cameras at highway rest stops. My name is Carolyn M. Kinkoph, MBA, and I am the surviving mother of a human trafficking victim, Courtney M. Kinkoph (deceased). I am also a Co-Founder of the Alliance Against Human Trafficking. As the mother of a victim who was trafficked for several years in multiple Ohio counties and several states, I strongly support H.B. 473 to amend [Section 5501.03](#)¹ of the Ohio Revised Code to install and maintain security camera systems at rest stops.

Security cameras at highway rest stops are a tool that can be used by law enforcement to identify and recover victims, plus detect traffickers and others who engage in criminal activities. Human trafficking victimization includes sex and labor trafficking and is hidden in plain sight. A victim may look like many of the people you see every day like my daughter, Courtney. Victims can be any gender, race, age, or socioeconomic status. Every victim’s experience is different, yet they are exploited because of vulnerabilities, ([NUAHT, 2023](#)).²

According to the International Labour Organization, there are an estimated 50 million men, women, and youth human trafficking victims in the world today, ([ILO, 2022](#)).³ This is second only to drug trafficking for which there is an intersection with human trafficking victimization. This intersection between human trafficking and controlled substances enables Ohio Narcotics Intelligence Center analysts to assist law enforcement agencies and task forces through investigative support. ([Governor’s Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force Report](#), 2023, p. 25).⁴

Traffickers manipulate victims’ substance dependency, and commit other crimes, ([Branscum & Fallik, 2021, p. 254](#)).⁵ Current legislation guiding the prosecution of traffickers and purchasers of commercial sex includes Trafficking in Persons Ohio Revised Code [Section 2905.32](#) (B) “offering a controlled substance to the victim, or by manipulating the victim’s controlled substance addiction.”⁶ Prior research supports that human trafficking legislation can improve case outcomes, ([Bales & Lize, 2007](#); [Bouche, Farrell & Wittmer, 2016](#)).^{7, 8} Therefore, legislation requiring security cameras at highway rest stops can also deter crime and provide additional support for law enforcement efforts to investigate human trafficking and other crimes.

According to the Administration for Children & Families, runaway/missing and homeless “youth

¹[Section 5501.03 - Ohio Revised Code | Ohio Laws](#)

²[NUAHT Anti-Human Trafficking Training Trailer - YouTube; https://www.nuaht.org/](#)

³[Wcms_854795.pdf \(ilo.org\)](#)

⁴[Governor’s Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force Report](#)

⁵[A content analysis on state human trafficking statutes: how does the legal system acknowledge survivors in the United States \(US\)? | Crime, Law and Social Change \(springer.com\)](#)

⁶[Section 2905.32 - Ohio Revised Code | Ohio Laws](#)

⁷[Investigating Human Trafficking: Challenges, Lessons Learned, and Best Practices | Office of Justice Programs \(ojp.gov\)](#)

⁸[Identifying Effective Counter-Trafficking Programs and Practices in the U.S.: Legislative, Legal, and Public Opinion Strategies that Work \(ojp.gov\)](#)

can become victims of violence, develop serious mental health and addiction problems, and be forced to trade sex for basic needs,” ([FYSB, 2018](#)).⁹ The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children describes runaway youth (missing persons) with vulnerabilities that traffickers prey upon and victimize for their own benefit, ([NCMEC, 2024](#)).¹⁰ Runaways and missing youth are recruited by traffickers, ([Williamson & Prior, 2009](#)).¹¹ Missing and homeless adults are also vulnerable and victimized by traffickers. Sadly, this was evident with the victimization of my missing and endangered adult daughter, Courtney.

Courtney went missing on June 1, 2019 from a group home in Ohio. Her case manager indicated she was at risk of human trafficking victimization and encouraged me to reach out to the Northeast Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force ([Office of the Ohio Attorney General, 2022](#); [Task Forces \(cuyahogacounty.gov\)](#))^{12, 13} to seek assistance. Upon her recovery, Courtney shared that while she was reported missing to police, someone had dropped her off at a women’s shelter in Ohio where she was picked up by a truck driver. She was then transported to Detroit, Michigan along highways filled with rest stops. Courtney was trafficked for several months. She stated she was forced by her trafficker to beg and panhandle to earn a daily quota for permission sleep in the apartment. When she was unable to meet her daily quota, Courtney slept in abandoned alcoves and buildings.

If cameras were installed and monitored at the rest stops Courtney was taken to while she was missing, perhaps she and other victims like her would have a better chance of being returned home safely rather than suffering from human trafficking victimization. On April 20, 2020, Courtney was reported missing again to another local police department within Lake County, Ohio. She was sighted by police at a rest stop in Brush, Colorado after first traveling to Pittsburgh, PA from Ohio, sighted in Santa Monica, California, then finally recovered by Allen Park, Michigan police. I suspect there may have been time spent at Ohio rest stops along the way. This was the only recovery that was successful with law enforcement assistance out of the numerous times that Courtney was reported missing to multiple police agencies. She was recovered out of state by the Michigan law enforcement agency who cooperated with the local Ohio law enforcement agency by detaining Courtney until her parents and Legal Guardians were able to transport her safely back to Ohio for medical treatment.

This successful recovery could not have been done without the sighting and follow up that resulted in interagency cooperation between trained law enforcement officers. One barrier for law enforcement is that victims are groomed, fearful, and can develop a trauma-bond while victimized and/or missing which prohibits them from seeking assistance from law enforcement, medical treatment, or other needed services. Fortunately, this time law enforcement looked beneath the surface and coordinated efforts for a successful recovery, which is not always the outcome.

Courtney died as a result of her human trafficking victimization. She went missing for the last time from a group home in Ohio in November 2021 and was found deceased in an abandoned apartment

⁹[Runaway & Homeless Youth Program Overview Fact Sheet \(hhs.gov\)](#)

¹⁰[Child Sex Trafficking \(missingkids.org\)](#)

¹¹[19361520802702191.pdf](#)

¹²[2022-Human-Trafficking-AR_WEB \(ohioattorneygeneral.gov\)](#)

¹³[Task Forces \(cuyahogacounty.gov\)](#)

in February 2022, still in Ohio. That same year, there were 131 reports from Ohio to the National Human Trafficking for various venues for sex trafficking. 6 out of 131 were truck stop-based, ([National Human Trafficking Hotline, 2021](#)).¹⁴ Research also suggests victims are forced to work truck stops, ([Williamson & Prior, 2009](#), p. 56).¹⁵ Courtney previously told me in 2021 that she talked to strangers online because she would never have to worry about meeting them in person. She was wrong as are so many children and adults in Ohio and elsewhere who are groomed and preyed upon because of their vulnerabilities, sometimes by individuals who will travel to pick them up and transport them to other locations in the State of Ohio and throughout the United States. Without the ability to identify victims through monitored technology such as rest stop security cameras, we miss them.

Missed opportunities include violence prevention, drug and human trafficking identification, victim and missing person recovery, deterring crime, and evidence collection in Ohio without cameras being installed and monitored by the Ohio Department of Safety and the Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP). I am not an attorney. However, per the [Ohio Administrative Code Rule Chapter 5501:2-4 for Rest Areas and Roadside Parks](#),¹⁶ the state highway patrol has full authority to enforce this rule and all state laws within the rest areas as well as on the highways, one of which is the solicitation of voluntary donations (also known as panhandling or begging).

I attended a Human Trafficking Interdiction and Operations training hosted by OSHP and presented by the [Human Trafficking Training Center](#)¹⁷ team. OSHP law enforcement personnel are well-trained regarding drug and human trafficking interdiction. They are uniquely situated to make the installation and monitoring of cameras at rest stops a success for the goal of stopping missed opportunities and saving lives. Additionally, OSHP Intelligence Unit analysts provide support to law enforcement for case support, including human trafficking investigations for which they responded to 130 requests for assistance between July 2021 to July 2022, ([Governor's Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force Report](#), 2023, p. 26).¹⁸

As Courtney's mother, I advocated for her care her entire life along with her father. There were multiple human trafficking occurrences in several Ohio counties and out of State. Courtney's history of human trafficking and elopement were documented in her annual Lake County Probate Court Expert Evaluations as well as in her PASRR interview statement from January 2020 while she was incarcerated for possession of drugs obtained through her coercion. Additionally, there are several police reports from various jurisdictions in Ohio and out of state. It is critical to protect human trafficking and other victims from perpetrators of crime. As the survivor mother of a human trafficking victim whose victimization led to her death, it is important for me to advocate for survivors and victims, like Courtney. You can make a difference, too.

Chair Ghanbari, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the House Homeland Security Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide proponent testimony for House Bill 473, legislation requiring security cameras at highway rest stops. I would be glad to answer any questions.

¹⁴[Ohio | National Human Trafficking Hotline](#)

¹⁵[19361520802702191.pdf](#)

¹⁶[Chapter 5501:2-4 - Ohio Administrative Code | Ohio Laws](#)

¹⁷[Home | HTTC \(humantraffickingtrainingcenter.com\)](#)

¹⁸[Governor's Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force Report](#)