



**State Senator Stephanie Kunze  
District 16**

Senate Judiciary Committee  
February 28, 2024  
Senate Bill 214 Sponsor Testimony

Thank you Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony for Senate Bill 214.

This legislation would allow a victim of human trafficking to expunge certain criminal records. As some of you may recall, I had previously joint sponsored similar legislation with Senator Teresa Fedor after learning from advocates that, following the passage of Senate Bill 4 from the 132<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly, many survivors of human trafficking remain unable to have their records expunged. This is because the current language in Section 2953.36 of the ORC is needlessly restrictive by specifically enumerating soliciting, loitering, and prostitution as predicate offenses a victim must be convicted of in order to apply for record expungement. This language excludes survivors who were charged with a qualifying offense but were ultimately not convicted, survivors of sex trafficking with other convictions outside of the required three, and all survivors of labor trafficking from accessing relief.

I was grateful to have worked with Senator Fedor on Senate Bill 183 last GA, and am proud to reintroduce the bill again now, but with improved language that has been agreed upon by the interested parties; language such as maintaining the current law for those with a predicate offense; and expanding eligibility to individuals convicted of a misdemeanor, F4 or F5, even without the predicate offense, but is subject to clear and convincing evidence that the individual is a victim of human trafficking.

Traffickers will often make their victims commit crimes not related to sexual activity, such as theft, shop lifting, drug distribution, trespassing and even in some cases drug trafficking, and the victim oftentimes has no choice or they can face extreme violence. These expungement barriers create many collateral consequences for the individual but also our economy. Failure to receive an expungement prevents these survivors from having stable housing, accessing certain social services, and finding gainful employment; all the things an individual needs to rebuild their lives.

The Prison Policy Initiative, estimates the cost of employment losses among workers with records at \$87 billion annually in lost gross domestic product<sup>i</sup> and the Brennan Center, found that “people who have been incarcerated see their subsequent earnings reduced by an average of 52 percent, with an average lifetime earnings loss of nearly half a million dollars; in the aggregate, people with criminal convictions face lost wages in excess of \$372 billion every year.”<sup>ii</sup>

In short, SB 214 will open doors to employment, safe stable housing, family reunification and successful, healthy community integration. This is crucial to the life and well-being of survivors and the fight against human trafficking. With the compromise language that is in this bill, it is my greatest hope that we are able to have this legislation enacted for the benefit of human trafficking survivors in our state.

Chairman Manning, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 214. I am happy to answer any questions that you might have.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://static.prisonpolicy.org/scans/EverySecond.fwd.us.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/conviction-imprisonment-and-lost-earnings-how-involvement-criminal#:~:text=People%20who%20have%20spent%20time,an%20average%20of%2022%20percent.>