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House Judiciary Committee
Proponent Testimony for H.B. 47
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Chair Thomas, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Isaacsohn, and members of the House Judiciary Committee:

My name is Lisa DeGeeter, and I am the Senior Director of Policy and Prevention for the Ohio Domestic Violence Network. Thank you for the opportunity to provide support for H.B. 47, legislation that will increase penalties for crimes of human trafficking, abduction, and kidnapping and enhances penalties for these crimes against minors.

The Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN) is Ohio's federally designated domestic violence coalition, representing 76 local domestic violence organizations throughout the state. In 2023, ODVN received a \$1.8 million grant from the Ohio Department of Public Safety to expand domestic violence services for survivors of human trafficking. With these funds, ODVN then awarded 32 subgrants to member domestic violence programs to increase their capacity, training, and connection to resources to better support human trafficking survivors across the state.¹

As a result, survivors were able to access critical services that had previously been out of reach. Programs provided shelter, outreach, case management, legal advocacy, crisis intervention, peer support, housing assistance, transportation, and more. From January 2024 through February 2025, these programs served **531 survivors of human trafficking**.²

One of our programs helped a survivor who fled a trafficking situation in Florida find housing. The survivor told us, *"You have no idea how much this means to me. I needed a place to breathe, to learn how to live on my own, to heal. I can't wait to have a space to cook holiday meals. Thank you."*

But healing alone is not enough. Survivors also deserve justice.

H.B. 47 ensures Ohio's criminal penalties reflect the severity and lifelong impact of these crimes. Traffickers, kidnappers, and those who target vulnerable children should be held fully accountable.

¹ See full list of subrecipients at https://www.odvn.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/ODVN_HumanTrafficking_ListOfPrograms.pdf

² Available from https://www.odvn.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/ODVN_FactSheet_December2024.pdf



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Increasing penalties sends a clear message: Ohio does not tolerate exploitation, and our justice system will respond with the seriousness these crimes demand.

On behalf of the Ohio Domestic Violence Network and our 76 member programs, I would like to thank Representatives Williams and Santucci for championing this legislation. H.B. 47 is a meaningful step toward ensuring that survivors receive the justice they deserve, and that those who cause harm are held accountable.