



OHIO CHAPTER

The Ohio Chapter of the International Association of Forensic Nurses (Ohio Chapter of IAFN) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 47. We support House Bill 47 and increasing the penalty for human trafficking of a minor or person with developmental disabilities from second to first-degree felony. Keeping these vulnerable populations safe and protected means better protection for all Ohioans.

International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN) is the premier, global forensic nursing organization representing 6,000 nurses from 34 countries who provide specialized healthcare for individuals impacted by violence and trauma. IAFN membership includes more than 230 nurses in Ohio represented by the Ohio Chapter of IAFN. Forensic nurses are registered or advanced practice nurses who receive specialized education to provide expert care for individuals experiencing acute and long-term consequences of violence and trauma. Our work is instrumental in identifying victims, collecting forensic evidence, and ensuring survivors receive appropriate medical care and criminal justice referrals.

As forensic nurses, largely located in emergency rooms across Ohio, we are often on the front lines of healthcare, which puts us in a position to recognize signs of human trafficking. Forensic nurses also play an essential role in educating others about human trafficking, including legislators, other healthcare professionals, law enforcement, and community members. They may lead training programs on how to recognize signs of trafficking, the proper way to respond, and how to ensure that victims receive appropriate referrals to community providers such as advocacy and criminal justice.

Victims of human trafficking often suffer from various physical and mental health issues, including trauma, chronic illnesses, and mental health conditions such as PTSD. Forensic nurses provide necessary medical care, stabilizing victims and helping them heal from physical injuries and emotional trauma. This care can also create an opportunity to build trust and help victims feel safe enough to speak out about their situation.

Human trafficking exploits vulnerable individuals, often involving force, fraud, or coercion to engage people in labor or sex work. Effective laws create a legal framework to prosecute offenders. Moreover, House Bill 47 can deter many traffickers by establishing stricter penalties for the crime. The more severe the legal consequences, the less likely individuals will engage in such illegal activities. Also, while the traffickers face punishment for their crimes, victims can remain safe as they escape these dangerous individuals.

Thank you for your continued efforts to keep the people in Ohio safe and hold perpetrators of this crime accountable.

Submitted to the OH House Judiciary Committee

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