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April 29, 2025

Ohio House Judiciary Committee
77 S. High St, 11th Floor
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Chairman Thomas and members of the Committee,

I write to you in favor of House Bill 47, the Human Trafficking Prevention Act, which would increase and enhance human trafficking-related criminal charges.

As you know, I have been at the forefront of advocating for legislation which fights against human trafficking in Ohio throughout my government service. Too often traffickers have faced minimal prison sentences for their crimes. Law enforcement and prosecutors are forced to bring different charges, such as weapons offenses, in an attempt to keep these evildoers off the street for as long as possible. House Bill 47 would increase the penalties for several charges, including kidnapping, abduction, and trafficking in persons.

Importantly, the language would increase the victim age limit of kidnapping to 18 years old. This is a needed step to protect all minors from would-be abusers. If we believe that a 16- or 17-year old cannot legally consent to marriage, then it follows that they cannot consent to leaving with an adult, especially when there are sexual motivations.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the bill lowers the *mens rea* of trafficking in persons to 'recklessly'. In the battle against human trafficking, we can no longer allow for 'heedless indifference.' Indifference to a victims' plight leaves them in the hands of a trafficker who wishes them harm, which should be a crime in itself.

I thank Representatives Josh Williams and Nick Santucci for their continued passion on this issue. HB 47 rightfully targets the traffickers themselves and ensures they are prosecuted to the fullest extent. I would be happy to discuss this legislation with you or members of your committee at their convenience.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dave Yost".

Dave Yost
Ohio Attorney General