



House Bill 96
House Public Safety Committee
Collaborative to End Human Trafficking
Kirsti Mouncey, President & CEO

Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Thomas, and Members of the Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today in support of survivors of human trafficking. My name is Kirsti Mouncey, and I the President & CEO of the Collaborative to End Human Trafficking (CEHT), an organization in Cuyahoga County dedicated to ensuring a coordinated, trauma-informed response to survivors while promoting prevention efforts aimed to stop trafficking before it begins.

Human trafficking is not an abstract problem—it is occurring right now in our communities, affecting some of the most vulnerable members of our society. Ohio has long been recognized as a hotspot for trafficking because of its highway system, economic disparities, and population centers, making it crucial that we invest in strategies that both prevent trafficking and support survivors as they rebuild their lives.

In the last state budget, \$4.5 million each fiscal year was allocated to combat human trafficking through the Office of Criminal Justice Services within the Department of Public Safety. This funding has been invaluable. For context, the continued reduction in federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding threatens the stability of many survivor services, making state investment more essential than ever. That is why I am here today to urge continued and increased support for the Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS) line item to guarantee that prevention efforts, data collection, and enhancements to screening processes stay a priority. Screening tools play a crucial role in identifying survivors early, particularly among high-risk groups such as youth in foster care and those involved in the juvenile justice system. Expanding trauma-informed training and funding for technology upgrades that will enhance screening documentation and tracking across all organizations who might touch trafficking is vital. We must begin to better focus our efforts on a coordinated screening, tracking and response system to ensure survivors receive immediate and comprehensive support. I'm proud to say that in Cuyahoga County, all the right pieces and players are in place to ensure these goals become a reality.

Ohio has been at the forefront of tackling human trafficking, but without sustained and increased funding, we risk losing the progress we've achieved. Survivors require long-term support to heal, rebuild, and move forward; state investment ensures that organizations like ours can continue to coordinate these essential services.



Chair Abrams and Members of the Committee, the work being done in Ohio is saving lives, but much more remains to be accomplished. With your ongoing commitment, we can expand our efforts, enhance our prevention strategies, and ensure that every survivor in Ohio has access to the necessary resources. I appreciate your time and leadership on this issue and am open to any questions you may have.