Proponent Testimony- House Technology and Innovation Committee
HB 84 — Enact the Innocence Act
March 18th, 2025

Chairman Claggett, Vice Chair Workman, Ranking Member Mohamed and members of the committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 84, the Innocence Act, which prohibits any organization from failing to verify the age of a person attempting to access material that is obscene or harmful to juveniles, prohibits a person from using another person's likeness to create sexual images of the other person, and to create a private right of action for each prohibited activity.

My name is Paula Haines, and I serve as the CEO of Freedom a la Cart.

At Freedom a la Cart, we empower survivors of sex trafficking and exploitation to build lives of freedom and self-sufficiency. We do this by providing workforce training, wraparound support, and a trusted community that walks alongside them. What began in 2011 with a single food cart has grown into a thriving café, bakery, and catering business that not only fuels our mission but also serves as a crucial stepping stone for survivors seeking economic independence. Today, our social enterprise generates 57% of our organization's revenue while providing employment and job training to those on the path to freedom.

An estimated 29,100 people in Ohio fall victim to trafficking each year. According to cases reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, pornography is the third most common form of sex trafficking—behind escort services and illicit massage businesses. Among domestic minor trafficking victims forced into pornographic production, the average age of entry is just 12.8 years old. With the pornography industry valued between $1 billion and $97 billion, traffickers see a lucrative opportunity in selling explicit images and videos to online platforms.

For many survivors, even after they escape their traffickers and fight to reclaim their lives, the digital footprint of their past remains a haunting barrier. Explicit images and videos—sometimes taken under coercion, sometimes fabricated through digital manipulation—continue to circulate online, leaving survivors vulnerable to further exploitation and retraumatization.

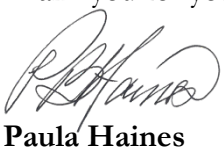
One survivor shared with me the lasting impact of this violation:

> *"When I was in active addiction and being trafficked, someone created a fake Instagram account with my face photoshopped onto a naked child's body, advertising to sell explicit content. Today, I've worked hard in my recovery. I successfully completed the workforce development program at Freedom a la Cart and now work full-time helping other survivors like me. I've turned my trauma into something meaningful. But after years in*

the commercial sex trade, I still live with the fear that someone, somewhere, is selling images of me—profiting off my body without my consent."

No one should have to carry this fear. At Freedom a la Cart, we strongly support legislation that protects victims of online exploitation and grants them the peace of mind they deserve as they rebuild their lives.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.



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