Ohio House of Representatives

Majority Whip Nick Santucci

Senate Judiciary Committee
Sponsor Testimony for Am. House Bill 47
November 5, 2025

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today on House Bill 47, which would enact the Human Trafficking Prevention Act.

This legislation will increase penalties for human trafficking, kidnapping, and abduction, and will create extra penalties when these crimes are committed against minors and those with developmental disabilities. This bill will also lower the culpable mental state for commission of human trafficking crimes from "knowingly" to "recklessly," to ensure that those involved in human trafficking face the consequences of their actions.

Ohio has been and continues to be a human trafficking hotspot, due to our state's unique position and infrastructure that makes it easy for these crimes to go unnoticed. To give a few examples, Ohio has the nation's highest number of truck stops, an extensive highway system, and proximity to the Canadian border.[1] In 2021, Ohio ranked sixth in the nation for the number of cases reported to the Human Trafficking Hotline, with 1,161 contacts.[2] That breaks down to just over 3 cases per day. In 2023, Ohio received an overall grade of "F" on its Report Card on Child and Youth Sex Trafficking from Shared Hope International.[3] Human trafficking is not only a serious crime and abuse of human rights, but also destabilizes a community and creates an environment of insecurity and exploitation. This legislation will contribute to greater safety in our communities and send a clear message to traffickers that their crimes will not be tolerated in Ohio.

My district, which includes parts of Trumbull County, has long suffered from human trafficking activity. To name a few, in March of 2023, raids were made on three spas in Warren and Austintown, Ohio that were suspected to be engaging in money laundering and human trafficking activities.[4] In September of 2023, Attorney General Yost and the Ohio Organized

[1] Human Trafficking Front, Human Trafficking in Ohio: Complete Prevention Guide, "Human Trafficking in Ohio," https://humantraffickingfront.org/human-trafficking-in-ohio/.
[2] Human Trafficking Hotline, National Hotline 2021 Ohio State Report, https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/2023-01/Ohio%20State%20Report%20For%202021.docx%20%281%29.pdf.
[3] Shared Hope International, Report Cards on Child & Youth Sex Trafficking, https://reportcards.sharedhope.org/year2023/ohio/.
[4] Coordinated Crackdown in Mahoning Valley Targets Human Trafficking and Money Laundering Operation, 03/13/2023, https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Media/News-Releases/March-2023/Coordinated-Crackdown-in-Mahoning-Valley-Targets-M.

Crime Investigations Commission led "Operation Buyer's Remorse," a statewide effort to arrest those attempting to buy sex and to identify victims, and arrested 160 suspects in a single week. Among these 160 suspects were several who lived in and around my district.[5] It is our responsibility as legislators to contribute to the safety of our communities and end these crimes.

I want to thank our law enforcement for the work that they do to combat human trafficking in Ohio, particularly the members of the Mahoning Valley Human Trafficking Task Force, the collaborative law enforcement effort in the Lake to River region. They have worked tirelessly to protect Ohioans, and their efforts have had a huge impact on our communities.

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you again for giving me the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 47. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

[5] WKBN News, "160 arrested in Ohio human trafficking crackdown: Some local," https://www.wkbn.com/news/ohio/160-arrested-in-ohio-human-trafficking-crackdown-some-local/.