

Chairman Eklund, Vice Chair Hughes, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Criminal Justice Committee; thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony for Senate Bill 284.

Over 150 years ago, our nation fought a war, in part to abolish slavery. They realized then, the value of human life and everyone's right to exist in a free society. Unfortunately, the enslavement and trafficking of human beings not only still exists today, but is thriving. And it's not just a problem in lands far away or times long ago, it's here and it's now. This despicable act does not differentiate; it can affect any race, color, religion, gender, age or social economic background.

But there will not be a Great Emancipation this time. These victims are freed one at a time, or sometimes in small groups, and quite often their freedom comes with a price. It comes through the act of being arrested, for a crime that they did not wish to, or willingly, commit.

These victims have already suffered. They have been held against their will, by force, threats or coercion. They have suffered mental, emotional and physical abuse, and anguish. And through an arrest, even though that may save them in the long run, they will still feel humiliation and fear of repercussion.

These victims have suffered enough. They need to be able to move ahead, to have a fresh start, to return to society as a functional human being. And to get beyond their past and take that place in society, they need a clean slate.

Now, whether they are looking for employment, housing, dealing with a financial institution, or trying to further their education to better their lives, it doesn't matter whether they were convicted of a crime or not, the other party will still see it. And not only can judgment be clouded, but these victims will be forced to face their tribulation again, every time this happens. The only way to avoid this, is for the records in these cases to be expunged.

That is why I am asking for your consideration in the matter of Senate Bill 284.

Thank you for your attention. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have at this time.

Patricia Young