

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF S.B. 4

From Rachel, a survivor of sex-trafficking

Dear Committee:

Thank you for taking the time to listen to what I have to say. I am so happy that you are considering a new law that will allow me and others to get their criminal records expunged. For me, this would mean erasing decades of hurt, pain, and humiliation.

When I was 12, I was sexually molested by an older man who lived in my neighborhood. I was so ashamed and embarrassed that I did not tell anyone. This affected me greatly and made me more withdrawn with friends and my family. When I was 16, I met my pimp. He was ten years older than me and he dressed and acted very nice. He told me he was a lawyer and I believed him. We started dating and he was sweet and kind to me. After a while, he started showing me nice houses and told me "If you want to live there with me, you need to help me." After a few months, I ran away with him and was completely dependent on him. That is when things changed and my pimp started trafficking me for more than ten years.

My pimp started forcing me to sleep with men at truck stops. He would drop me off at the truck stop at the beginning of the day and then pick me up late at night. If I didn't make enough money, he would beat me. There were many days where I didn't have anything to eat. After a while, he brought me to New York city. He would make me dress in skimpy clothes in the cold weather and sleep on the streets. Many times, I thought I would die of cold or hunger. One time, in New York, my pimp was angry with me so he beat me continually for 7 blocks until I was bloody and couldn't stand. People on the streets just watched and nobody offered to help me.

Many of the johns who slept with me were very violent as well. I was stabbed, thrown out of cars, beaten, raped, and abused. To this day, I still have physical pain in my back and neck from where I was beaten.

After a couple of years, my pimp got me addicted to drugs in order to control me. He would decide when and if I was able to have my "fix" and he would withhold drugs from me if I did not make enough money. During the many years that I was trafficked, I was arrested for prostitution-related offenses, but I was also arrested and convicted of drug felonies.

Finally, about nineteen years ago, I became pregnant with my twins and I decided I needed to stop using drugs and I needed to get off the street. I went back home and reunited with my family. I have been drug-free for nineteen years and I have raised my twin daughters who just graduated from high school last spring.

Although it has been almost twenty years, my issues from my trafficking victimization still persist. I still have physical pain and headaches from the beatings I received. I also have PTSD and serious depression and a result of what I went through for many years. Every day is still a challenge for me and I still go to support groups every week.

My criminal record is hard for me because it affects me getting housing (I am trying to get a new house now) and applying for jobs. It is also embarrassing for me to have a criminal record. I don't like telling my daughters that I was a victim, but I am also a criminal in the eyes of society.

Senate Bill 4 would change my life and it is what I have been waiting for for many years. Please vote in favor of this bill and help me to continue to rebuild my life.

Sincerely,

Rachel

Contact info: Rachel is a client of the Human Trafficking Law Clinic at Case Western Reserve University School of Law and can be reached at msk20@case.edu