



HB 128

Rep. Kyle Koehler, Sponsor Testimony

4-1-2019

Chairman Lang, Vice Chair Plummer and Ranking Member Leland – members of the House Criminal Justice Committee thank you for considering House Bill 128.

I would like to indicate my agreement with the points laid out by my colleague, Representative Miller, and will not belabor the fine points he has already laid out.

If you examine the long title of the bill you will see that it reads, in part: “to modify the penalties for certain soliciting offenses and to specify that an imposed fine may be deposited into the Victims of Human Trafficking Fund.”

This bill does two things. It more harshly punishes those who choose use and pay other human beings for sex, and it empowers courts to divert money taken from the perpetrators into a fund solely dedicated to the care of human trafficking victims.

In addressing prostitution and sexual exploitation we must address the issue of supply and demand. In the end, prostitution in Ohio always involves more than one person. The first purpose of House Bill 128 is to change state law in order to combat the demand side of this issue. The increased penalties demonstrate we are serious about stopping “Johns” from creating the demand that increases human trafficking in our state.

As Colonel Miller said, it is also the purpose of House Bill 128 to give judges the discretion to place half of the fine paid by the perpetrator to the Victims of human trafficking fund, which was created in the 129th General Assembly. Money in this fund is to be used “for the sole purpose of treating, caring for, rehabilitating, educating, housing, and providing assistance for victims of trafficking in persons.” (ORC 5101.87)

It is time to get serious about the issues of human trafficking and sexual exploitation in Ohio, and I believe HB 128 is a step in the right direction. I stand with my colleague, Representative Miller today and ask that you help us pass this legislation that increases the penalty on solicitation and increases the funds necessary to fight human trafficking in the state of Ohio.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We will gladly take questions from the committee.