



Keller Hall 329  
300 College Park  
Dayton, OH 45469-2790

Senator Stephen A Huffman, Chair  
Senator Niraj Antani, Vice Chair  
Senator Nickie J Antonio, Ranking Member  
Health Committee

May 19, 2022

Support for HB 81, Revise laws governing massage establishments / massage therapy

Dear Senators;

Abolition Ohio is the Miami Valley's Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition. Our membership includes over 30 organizations and 200 individuals across southwest Ohio. We work to prevent human trafficking, protect victims and survivors, and assist law enforcement in prosecuting traffickers.

House Bill 81 is needed because it will help reduce commercial sex and human trafficking (both sex and labor trafficking) in the state of Ohio. It will empower unincorporated townships to pass ordinances to regulate massage businesses. Closing the "relaxation massage loophole" will greatly simplify (and reduce the cost) of law enforcement operations to shut down illicit massage businesses.

According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, over the past five years, Illicit Massage/Spa Businesses have been the number one or number two venue for sex trafficking in the US. In Ohio, which is #6 in the nation for cases reported to the national hotline, illicit massage/spa businesses have consistently been one of the top types of sex trafficking venues reported.

In 2019, a massive law enforcement operation raided 13 illicit massage businesses in northeast Ohio as part of a human trafficking investigation. Also, three massage parlors near Columbus were shut down for suspicion of human trafficking and prostitution. Similar raids have been conducted over the past few years in many Ohio cities.

This is a statewide issue. A team of researchers led by me at the University of Dayton recently published a report entitled: *Disrupting Illicit Massage Businesses and Human Trafficking in Ohio*. We find that illicit massage businesses are a multi-billion dollar industry with over 10,000 operating across the US and 300 in Ohio. Illicit massage networks take advantage of limitations in the existing law to exploit and traffic vulnerable women for both commercial sex and forced labor.

The membership of Abolition Ohio strongly supports passage of House Bill 81 because we see it as a commonsense way to reduce sex and labor exploitation and trafficking. We urge you to support this bill. I thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ANTHONY TALBOTT', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Anthony "Tony" Talbott, Director