



**Proponent testimony submitted to the
Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee
Senate Bill 183
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Chair Manning, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Thomas and Members of the Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 183, which would eliminate certain barriers to expungement for survivors of human trafficking. As Ohio's statewide sexual violence coalition, the Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence (OAESV) advocates for comprehensive responses and rape crisis services for survivors and empowers communities to prevent sexual violence.

Human trafficking is a multi-billion-dollar industry that criminally takes freedom from 24.9 million people worldwide.¹ Human trafficking takes many forms, and the Polaris Project has identified 25 distinct criminal business models consistent among human trafficking enterprises.² Human traffickers physically force, coerce, trick, defraud, or otherwise compel human beings into forced labor – many victims are forced into for-profit sexual violence victimization, wherein someone pays a trafficker to rape or otherwise sexually assault adult or child victims. Nationally, the most frequent age for entry into trafficking victimization is 12-14.³ A 2018 survey of human trafficking victims in 14 states, 55 percent of respondents reported attending school while being trafficked.⁴

Ohio currently ranks 9th among all 50 states in reported cases of human trafficking.⁵ As such, it is critical that this Legislature truly understand the lifelong consequences for trafficking victims and pass laws like Senate Bill 183, that seek to improve outcomes for victims. As a threshold, traffickers often target already vulnerable victims, including children and young teenagers, and use heavy amounts of psychological and physical violence and coercion to gain control over their victims. Trafficking enterprises profit by forcing victims to commit violations of state and/or federal law. Victims may be

¹ Polaris Project, *National Survivor Survey*, available at https://polarisproject.org/?gclid=CjwKCAjwzOqKBhAWEiwArQGwaKIknLB5MEGOFEznGkmgmrWbCXU2FrvITnAl3WLff5DzPCuw_Scc6RoC1kIQAvD_BwE.

² La Strada International, *Analyzing the Business Model of Trafficking in Human Beings to Better Prevent the Crime* (2010), available at <https://documentation.lastradainternational.org/doc-center/2466/analysing-the-business-model-of-trafficking-in-human-beings-to-better-prevent-the-crime>.

³ DoSomething.org, *11 Myths about Human Trafficking*, <https://www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-human-trafficking>.

⁴ Dr. Vanessa Bouche, Thorn, *Survivor Insights: The Role of Technology in Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking* (2018), available at https://www.thorn.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Thorn_Survivor_Insights_061118.pdf.

⁵ Camryn Justice, *Report shows Ohio ranked near top of active criminal human trafficking cases in 2019*, News 5 Cleveland, <https://www.news5cleveland.com/news/state/report-shows-ohio-ranked-near-top-of-active-criminal-human-trafficking-cases-in-2019>.

arrested and/or charged for crimes they were coerced or forced to commit by their trafficker; or as accessories to crimes committed by their trafficker. As a result, survivors are overwhelmingly charged with prostitution, theft, trespassing, or related charges, and face expensive legal fines and jail time. Survivors also face tremendous challenges once they have escaped their past and are ready to restart their lives. The legacy of involvement with the criminal legal system expands far beyond a prison or courtroom, with these remnants of a survivor's past blocking opportunities for stability, services, and well-being.

As this committee knows, Senate Bill 183 creates critical expansions to Ohio's current expungement system that will improve outcomes for many survivors of human trafficking. Specifically, under current law, human trafficking survivors may apply for expungement for soliciting or prostitution offenses. This small list does not even begin to scratch the surface of offenses traffickers impose on their victims, and the consequences to the victim's future are seemingly endless. For instance, one in three adults, or 77 million Americans, has a criminal record.⁶ We know that an individual's criminal record often dictates their potential to seek employment, housing, benefits, and other essential resources². For survivors of trafficking, criminal records can also determine future involvement with the criminal legal system; this interplay can easily become a self-perpetuating cycle, setting survivors up to lose. What can make matters even worse is the inaccessibility of options for criminal expungement of such records. Living with a criminal record exacerbates the trauma of victimization and stigmatization. As these barriers continue over time, they interfere with a survivor's ability to thrive and break the cycle of crime and trauma.

When it works properly, expungement can disrupt these cycles, and combat stigma and poverty by increasing access to employment, housing, and other fundamental rights. That is why we believe that this bill, which would expand the current trafficking victim expungement protections to include all crimes except aggravated murder, murder, and rape, if participation in the crime was the result of trafficking is essential to helping support survivors in rebuilding their lives and reducing risk of further harm presented by the barrier of a criminal record.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. I am happy to provide any additional information by email at egemar@oaesv.org.

⁶ National Conference of State Legislatures, *Barriers to Work: People with Criminal Records* (July 7, 2018), <https://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/barriers-to-work-individuals-with-criminal-records.aspx>.