

PROPONENT TESTIMONY
SB 183, The Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee
Lara Wilken
October 18, 2021

Chair Manning, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony for Senate Bill 183.

My name is Lara Wilken I am a registered nurse, now college professor for Bowling Green State University with a passion for providing education on the issue of human trafficking and healthcare. Caring so much for the rights and health of this vulnerable population I recently earned my Doctorate of Nursing Practice with a focus of healthcare and human trafficking. In addition to this I have devoted the last eight years of my career providing volunteer education to providers on the assessment and identification of human trafficking and have worked to create a survivor informed, organizational healthcare policy.

Senate Bill 183 is another essential component to addressing the complex array of survivor's needs, which I am in full support of. As I mentioned, the work that I have been doing in healthcare has been survivor informed. The survivors that I have worked with who have benefited from their record being expunged are some of the most incredible people I have ever had the pleasure of meeting and are now are productive, thriving members of society. Each of the individuals I have worked with has used this opportunity to turn their tragedy into triumph. Passing this law would further extend that opportunity to others, creating a greater trust of people in positions of authority, further assisting healthcare providers, law enforcement and social services to address the complex needs of these individuals.

Additionally, passing of this law would help to set a precedent that the days of victim blaming are now past us. While we are making strides in the state of Ohio for this, yet there is still a great amount of work to be done. The passing of this bill will serve as a catalyst that all victims of human trafficking have a fair chance at freedom, a privilege granted by our country, yet some have never had the liberty to know. We have learned that victims of trafficking can be arrested due to a number of offenses with prostitution or solicitation not being one of those charges, because they were either not caught or convicted for these type of offenses. Knowing this let us please consider our labor trafficking victims

here as well, who may have never been involved in prostitution, but have been forced to commit crimes. With the current law requiring victims to have convictions for prostitution and or solicitation before applying for expungement, we have no way to assist these individuals in the recovery and restoration of their lives.

Passing of this law is the beginning to the end of modern day slavery in the state of Ohio. Passing of this law will give both sex and labor trafficking victims the opportunity to have equal access to all of the freedoms that have been taken from them, it will also give the state of Ohio recognition in being a leader in this fight. Instead of being recognized as one of the top states where trafficking is reported, we can be viewed as one of the tops states where trafficking is not tolerated and survivors are supported. It is my hope that you will consider the endless possibilities of restoration and rehabilitation the expungement of records can provide. As a registered nurse and college professor I ask that you consider this not only from a judicial standpoint, but also a medical standpoint. By passing Senate Bill 183 you will help to address the many complex needs of survivors which range from, but are not limited to employment, access to medical care, continuing education, housing, social services and many more. If you have any further questions regarding this matter please do not hesitate to reach out to me. I thank you for both your consideration and your time.

Sincerely,

Lara B. Wilken, DNP, RN

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