



**State Representative Cindy Abrams**  
**State Representative Rick Carfagna**  
***Sponsor Testimony - House Bill 431***  
***Senate Judiciary Committee***  
***September 2, 2020***

**Rep. Cindy Abrams**

Chairman Eklund, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas and fellow members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Thank you for affording us the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 431.

Ohio is currently the fourth worst state for human trafficking in the nation, fueled by an almost unlimited demand for sexual activity for hire. While assigned to the Cincinnati Police Department's Vice Unit, I saw first-hand how this has devastated the lives of many young women who have fallen victim to these pimps and johns. Many of the women I encountered were addicted to drugs, selling themselves for their next high.

It was common for a john to pull up to a known street corner and solicit a prostitute, drive around the corner and commit the sex act, then drop her back off. The scene is almost comparable to a drive-thru open to anyone with a little bit of disposable income. After exposing himself to diseases such as Hepatitis, TB and STD's, the john then goes home to the unsuspecting family, putting them at risk, and faces no consequences. The prostitute, however, is left on the corner to repeat that cycle several times until she meets her quota established by her pimp if she wants enough food and somewhere to sleep and stay alive that night. This is a devastating cycle that needs to be broken.

Under current law, it is not difficult for someone caught soliciting a prostitute to keep that information hidden from friends, family, and their employer. No one accidentally engages in sexual activity for hire. These offenders are aware their conduct is illegal and choose to engage anyway. If we can shine a light on this crime, especially on the individuals enabling it and supplying the demand for it, I believe we can effectuate real change.

Rep. Rick Carfagna

HB 431 takes a different approach to combat human trafficking by focusing on the demand-side of this problem. The legislation creates Ohio's Sexual Exploitation Database, a registry of individuals who are convicted of or plead guilty to charges of soliciting a prostitute. Under the bill, the clerk of courts will send the offender's conviction record to the Attorney General's office. The conviction record will include the offender's full legal name, last known address, color photograph, description of the offense, the date the offense was committed, and the location of where the offense was committed. The Attorney General's office will enter all of this information into the database, where it will remain and be publicly accessible for a period of five years.

After five years has elapsed, the offender will be automatically removed from the registry. The offender will also be automatically removed from the database in the event of a conviction or plea of guilty being overturned prior to the expiration of five years.

Ohioans need a tool to hold each other accountable for crimes committed largely against young women who are trapped in an inescapable chain of poverty, addiction, and violence. We believe having a publicly accessible registry may prove to be the deterrent that keeps someone from engaging in illegal behavior.

Anything we can do to reduce demand and deter this crime are worthy of our consideration, and we look forward to working with you all to advance this idea through the legislative process. In the coming weeks, you can expect to hear and read expert testimony on this proposal from both the Attorney General's office and those on the frontlines in our communities.

Additionally, during the House committee process, the entirety of Senate Bill 13, sponsored by Senator Fedor, was also amended into the bill. Senate Bill 13 is another strong piece of anti-human trafficking legislation, which received unanimous support in both this committee as well as on the floor of the Senate.

I know this bill is very familiar to the members of this committee, so I'll stick to a brief overview: Senate Bill 13, also known as the Protect Trafficked Minors Act, would eliminate provisions of current law which create distinctions between human trafficking victims who are under 16, and those who are 16 and 17. Enacting these changes will ensure that Ohio's prosecutors are able to more fully hold traffickers accountable when they target the most vulnerable of our population.

Rep. Abrams and I are proud of the broad, bipartisan support HB 431 received during House deliberations. Our bill passed unanimously out of the Criminal Justice

committee, and was passed by the House by a vote of 92 to 1. We look forward to working with our colleagues in the Senate on this critical piece of legislation, which we believe will be instrumental as we work to end human trafficking in Ohio.

Chairman Eklund, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas and members of this committee, thank you again for allowing us to provide testimony and at this time, we would be happy to answer any questions.