



Representative Jena Powell

Ohio's 80th House District

Chairman LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on HB 276 – the Prosecuting Trafficking Proceeds Act.

We all know that girl who is twelve years old. She lives in small town Ohio. Her mom is a teacher and her dad is an accountant. She goes to school every day and she spent her childhood writing diaries about what she wants to do when she grows up. She writes in diaries about her boy crush. She writes in diaries about the big things and the small things. Growing up it was only light, fun subjects until one thing led to another and she was pulled into the dark world of human trafficking.

This young, twelve-year old girl who once had dreams and ambitions and excitement for life is now trapped in darkness. The average age to be trafficked here in the United States is just twelve years old. This young girl is not a unique situation.

This is why I am excited about working on anti-human trafficking legislation. The United States of America has the number one demand in the world for buying sex. Ohio is the fifth worst state in the United States for human trafficking. This is not a republican or a democrat issue. This is an issue of human dignity being trampled on by society.

When we as humans see an injustice in society, we do not turn a blind eye. We do not walk towards that injustice. We run at that injustice fighting it with everything we have. We give parents the tools they need to understand this injustice. We give teachers the information they need to fight this injustice. We give politicians the information they need to fight this injustice. And today, by this piece of legislation, we will now be giving law enforcement another tool to fight the injustice of human trafficking in our communities and in our state. Under existing law, it is often difficult to charge pimps and traffickers with a crime because they are not physically present at the scene where prostitution is occurring.

The Prosecuting Trafficking Proceeds Act will:

- ❖ Create a new offense, “Receiving Proceeds of Prostitution,” making it illegal to receive money or any other thing of value earned by someone else for committing prostitution. Thus, connecting pimps and traffickers to a crime if they knowingly receive any thing of value from a sexual act for hire.
- ❖ Make receiving the proceeds of prostitution a Felony 3 (if the victim is a minor, it is a Felony 2)
- ❖ Make it easier for law enforcement and prosecutors to tie traffickers and pimps to illegal activity and return convictions for these heinous crimes.

Changes since last GA (HB 415):

- ❖ Rep. Seitz raised concerns last GA regarding stacking offenses. We have put into HB 276 anti-stacking language which will prohibit the new offense of “Receiving Proceeds of Prostitution” from being stacked onto similar offenses
- ❖ Today, you adopted amendments brought to us by Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys, and approved of by Attorney General Yost. These wording changes will ensure that this legislation accomplishes its proposed end to convict the pimp at the head of trafficking rings, rather than merely snag middlemen.

Human trafficking is a grave issue and a huge negative mark on our society. However, we can solve this problem together. You can read story after story of children here in Ohio who were trafficked, pulled out of the trafficking world, and brought home. One of the individuals who was trafficked at twelve here in our community was rescued out of a trafficking situation where she had been pulled into human trafficking by a relative and ultimately strangers who were addicted to meth and cocaine and were selling her to continue to get the fix they needed. But this girl was rescued because people did not turn a blind eye to injustice. While she felt like her life had no hope, after being rescued and going through counseling she can say, and I quote, “I had no idea, I had no idea, that life could be this free.” She now has hope because she received the help she needed.

Today, we don’t turn a blind eye to injustice. Today, we run towards what is right and we run directly at injustice, doing everything that we can in our community and our state to preserve the human dignity of every man, woman, and child. This is why I’m excited about the Prosecuting Trafficking Proceeds Act.

Thank you. I will now turn to my joint sponsor, Rep. Jean Schmidt.