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Committees

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and Veterans Affairs

Laura Lanese

State Representative

23rd Ohio House District

House Criminal Justice Committee: HB 390

Chairman LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and Members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for allowing me and Representative John to provide testimony on House Bill 390, which would require governmental evidence-retention entities to secure and test sexual assault examination kits in relation to an investigation or prosecution of trafficking in persons.

Under current law, sexual assault examination kits are not required to be tested in human trafficking cases. They are required to be tested for other crimes such as murder, voluntary or involuntary manslaughter, rape, attempted rape, sexual battery, and gross sexual imposition. The goal of HB 390 is to add human trafficking cases to the list of crimes that are required to be tested and submitted to the bureau of criminal identification and investigation or another crime laboratory for a DNA analysis of the contents of the kit if a DNA analysis has not previously been performed on the kit.

Human trafficking is essentially the unlawful use of vulnerable people to make a profit through sex work or labor. It is different from prostitution as there is a third party involved who is making money off of the crime. It is a lucrative business, upwards of \$35 bn worldwide, that robs children and adults of their dignity, their freedom and sometimes their lives. The victims' scars last a lifetime and often they will struggle their entire lives to overcome the harm done to them. Some will end up taking their own lives. It is particularly despicable when it involves children. Human trafficking affects all of us as well as it costs our state millions of dollars to repair the damage to the victims and to society. The goal of this legislation is to stop the trafficking of human victims by going after the perpetrators of these crimes and bringing them to justice.

House Bill 390 comes to us from Ohio Attorney General's office to fill a gap in the law designed to protect victims of sexual assault. Earlier this month, Attorney General Yost unveiled the results of his most recent human trafficking task force, the largest sting operation thus far. The operation netted more than two hundred perpetrators across the state. The arrests highlighted the cross section of perpetrators and included individuals from a wide range of profession, including a professor, a city council member, and a firefighter. Thus, the sting highlighted the extent human trafficking has penetrated all aspects of our society. Most importantly, the operation uncovered three children who were trafficking victims, as well as discovering ten previously missing children.

HB 390 will assist with the possibility of presenting additional evidence of sexual assault for anyone accused or convicted of human trafficking so that we may fully charge the perpetrator. It also allows our law enforcement partners to have another piece of solid evidence to use against traffickers, potentially leading to more prosecutions of those who are committing this offense. Ohio currently ranks #5 in human trafficking per capita according to the National Human Trafficking Hotline. With a committed effort by this state and the passage of HB 390 we can more successfully combat this scourge in Ohio.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 390, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

