

YWCA IS ON A MISSION

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Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee
H.B. 390 – February 15, 2022

Chair LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 390, which would provide a crucial tool for survivors of human trafficking to receive justice and be treated with the dignity and respect they so deserve.

My name is Amy Dudley and I am the Director of the Center for Survivors of Sexual Violence for YWCA Dayton. The Center for Survivors of Sexual Violence is the only accredited rape crisis center in our area covering both Montgomery and Preble counties. There are 14 YWCAs in Ohio and we are driven by a mission to eliminate racism, empower women, and support all who are survivors of gender-based violence.

YWCA Dayton provides 24/7, year-round shelter and supportive services for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and other forms of intimate-partner and gender-based violence. **In 2021 YWCA Dayton's domestic violence services sheltered 239 women and children; provided 15,109 nights of stay in shelter; answered 4,056 crisis calls; and provided more than 16,000 hours of advocacy, case management, and crisis support.** In the last 90 days, the Center for Survivors of Sexual Violence has provided medical and legal advocacy, assistance with shelter, resources and coordination with law enforcement for 9 human trafficking survivors.

Ohio currently ranks #5 in the nation in human trafficking per capita according to the National Human Trafficking Hotline. House Bill 390 closes a loophole in Ohio law by requiring that a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) examination be offered to survivors of human trafficking and then tested according to a set timeline.

It is already a requirement that these examinations be offered and then promptly tested in cases of rape, attempted rape, sexual battery, and gross sexual imposition, but the same requirements do not extend to human trafficking cases. Acquiring and performing a DNA analysis of these examinations is critical to successful prosecution of traffickers and will be very valuable to law enforcement.

The health needs of human trafficking victims are significant. Medical providers are in a unique position, where they can educate the victim, identify red flags and evaluate specific needs while collecting forensic evidence in order bring traffickers to justice.

We strongly support HB 390 and the additional evidence it will provide for law enforcement to prosecute human traffickers. Without this additional evidence, traffickers may go unidentified and will escape prosecution.

We do have one additional suggestion to make the bill even stronger and further support survivors of human trafficking. In our experience, it has been imperative to have either an advocate or a mental health professional available to aid in the care of a trafficked person. There are many trafficked persons who do not understand they are victims of a crime, which can lead to a lack of trust when it comes to providers. Without the critical piece of including an advocate or mental health provider, it may be difficult to establish groundwork for the trafficked person to feel safe enough to disclose details of what they have experienced. As you can see, the barriers for human trafficking survivors are

already substantial.

The approach typically used for sexual assault survivors within a SANE program are not always effective with survivors of trafficking. Often, they have been beaten, tortured, exposed to many forms of violence, isolated, deprived of food, water and basic needs. Many have also been subjected to substances in order for the trafficker to create addiction and dependence.

Exceptional medical treatment with the added component of an advocate or mental health professional would be the most effective way to secure convictions when these cases go to trial.

This bill already goes a long way in protecting survivors of human trafficking and the YWCA is very appreciative of Representatives Lanese and John for their leadership on the issue. In alignment with our mission, YWCA Dayton and the Center for Survivors of Sexual Violence thus requests that you support the passage of House Bill 390 in support of our organization's service population and human trafficking survivors throughout the state.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you have.