



PROPONENT TESTIMONY
HB 390, The Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee
Megan K. Mattimoe, Advocating Opportunity
February 14, 2022

Chairman LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony regarding House Bill 390 on behalf of Advocating Opportunity.

Advocating Opportunity is a nonprofit organization that provides holistic advocacy and free legal services to survivors of human trafficking. With offices in both Toledo and Columbus, our advocates and attorneys serve hundreds of survivors of human trafficking across the state every year. Given our dedication to ending human trafficking and reducing vulnerability to human trafficking among all populations, Advocating Opportunity has an interest in supporting proper efforts to better investigate human trafficking cases. As such, Advocating Opportunity comes before you in support of HB 390.

HB 390 will expand the existing practice of requiring expeditious testing of sexual assault examination kits to include investigations involving human trafficking. Testing these kits is an important tool in identifying and ultimately prosecuting a number of offenses, including human trafficking. Trafficking victims are often subjected to sexual assault, including rape.¹ Thus, ensuring that sexual assault examination kits related to human trafficking investigations are timely processed is an essential step in adequately combatting trafficking. Passing this bill would provide law enforcement with crucial DNA evidence and provide substantial assistance in identifying and investigating traffickers and abusers.² It will also bolster efforts to prevent kits from being left sitting on shelves and avoid further backlogs.³

With first responders being well-positioned to identify trafficking survivors and link them to supportive services, ensuring expeditious testing of sexual assault examination kits associated

¹ *Human Trafficking and Sexual Assault*, FNUSA (Aug. 2015), <https://freedomnetworkusa.org/app/uploads/2018/10/FNUSA-Human-Trafficking-and-Sexual-Assault-2015.pdf>.

² *Why Test All Kits, End the Backlog*, <https://www.endthebacklog.org/backlog-why-rape-kit-testing-important/why-testing-every-kit-matters>, last visited Feb. 11, 2022.

³ Stephanie Costello, *We Must End the Rape Kit Backlog for Sex Trafficking Victims*, *Austin American Statesman* (July 31, 2019), <https://www.statesman.com/story/opinion/columns/your-voice/2019/07/31/commentary-why-we-need-to-end-rape-kit-backlog-for-sex-trafficking-victims/4572730007/>.

with trafficking investigations is essential. Leaving survivors in long periods of investigative limbo regarding their case is harmful to their recovery. Retention and testing requirements are already in place concerning biological evidence associated with rape, sexual battery, and gross sexual imposition and HB 390 addresses a glaring oversight, ensuring that kits associated with human trafficking cases receive the same care. Given that this measure concerns an established practice, the burden of HB 390 is minimal and far outweighed by the benefits.

Advocating Opportunity supports HB 390's inclusion of violations of 2905.32 in the category of cases requiring prompt testing of sexual assault examination kits. Passing this bill will improve efforts to identify and prosecute human trafficking and will lend respect to survivors who choose to complete sexual assault examinations by ensuring that these kits are not shelved and forgotten. We thank the bill sponsors and this Committee for taking the time to hear our proponent testimony. We urge you to pass HB 390.