



**Ohio House
Criminal Justice Committee
May 7, 2024
Proponent Testimony on HB 385**

Dear Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Williams, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on this important effort. We are proud to support House Bill 385 and Ohio state leaders who are advancing critical protections for survivors of violence.

The Alliance for Safety and Justice (ASJ) is a multi-state organization that promotes effective approaches to public safety in states across the country. We also bring together diverse crime survivors via our flagship program, Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice, to advance policies that help underserved crime victims and stop cycles of crime. Our Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice network has over 180,000 members nationwide, including over 12,000 in Ohio. We support strategies that reduce costly over-reliance on incarceration, increase trauma recovery services, and build healthy communities.

Research shows that most survivors of human trafficking have a criminal record as a result of their victimization.¹ This can include convictions related to unaddressed substance abuse as a mechanism to cope with trauma, self-defense from ongoing violence, or coercion from traffickers to engage in other illegal activity.² Having a criminal record can prevent survivors from accessing safe and stable housing, securing employment, caring for children and other loved ones, furthering their education, and obtaining care and resources that help them to recover and attain stability in the wake of their victimization.

The vast majority of states, including Ohio, recognize that survivors need access to criminal record relief for offenses related to their human trafficking victimization.³ These laws are designed to allow survivors of human trafficking to overcome the many barriers associated with a criminal record so that they can begin to heal and move on with their lives.

HB 385 will expand record sealing pathways Ohio has already put into place for some survivors of sex trafficking. Currently, people who have been convicted of certain prostitution-related offenses may apply to expunge those convictions and as well as certain other offenses if they were a direct result of being a victim of human trafficking. *Survivors who do not have prostitution-related convictions, however, may not access Ohio's current expungement pathway for victims of human trafficking.*

¹ Polaris Project. (2023). [Criminal Record Relief for Trafficking Survivors](#).

² Free to Thrive. (2023). [Trafficked and Arrested](#).

³ Polaris Project. (2023). [Criminal Record Relief for Trafficking Survivors](#).

HB 385 will allow address this gap by creating a pathway for survivors to apply to have conviction of misdemeanor or lower-level felony offenses that are directly related to traumatic sexual violence sealed, regardless of whether or not they have a conviction for a prostitution-related offense. This bill will help survivors achieve stability and healing in the wake of victimization, and result in safer communities across Ohio.

This bill has the strong support of our Ohio Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice membership. We urge the committee to approve this legislation.

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