

**Proponent Testimony on House Bill 230  
House Homeland Security Committee  
Kirsti Mouncey, President and CEO  
Collaborative to End Human Trafficking  
October 18, 2023**

Good afternoon, Chair Ghanbari, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Homeland Security Committee. My name is Kirsti Mouncey, and I am the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Collaborative to End Human Trafficking (Collaborative). The Collaborative's mission is to lead, empower, and connect our community to eradicate human trafficking. As the backbone organization of a 75+ organization of Cuyahoga Counties Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition called Greater Cleveland's Coordinated Response to Human Trafficking, we provide strategic leadership to create social change.

Freedom is a fundamental human right. It is a cornerstone of what makes us human. Yet, across the world and in our own communities, this right has been stripped from far too many as they are forced, tricked, and coerced into situations over which they have no control.

I serve as a member of the Attorney General's Human Trafficking Initiative where I co-chair the Research/Gap Analysis & Data Subcommittee, and I am a member on the Governor's human trafficking task force. The legislature has supported numerous efforts aimed at eliminating human trafficking and we thank you for your support.

U.S. law defines human trafficking as the use of force, fraud, or coercion to compel a person into commercial sex acts or labor against their will. According to the International Labor Organization, nearly 21 million people are estimated to be trafficked globally. Of those, an estimated 54% are women and 46% are men. Forced labor generates \$150 billion a year around the world.

We support the penalties created in HB 230, which will create the more stringent offense of participating in an organization or operation for trafficking persons. By imposing these penalties, we are sending a clear message that individuals who participate in trafficking organizations will be prosecuted. We are also sending an important message of support to victims of trafficking and their families.

One suggestion I have, however, is to remove the term "participate in" in line 12. This change is needed to ensure that the bill doesn't inadvertently penalize individuals that have been trafficked, who are not willingly participating in the illegal activity.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.