

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

BILL NO: Senate Bill 214

TITLE: Allow human trafficking victim to expunge certain records

COMMITTEE: Senate Judiciary

DATE: Wednesday, April 8th, 2024

POSITION: Support

Dear Chairperson Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds and Senate Judiciary Committee Members:

At She Has A Name, we are a strong community that exists to fight human trafficking through education and care for those locally impacted. Our vision is to see all those impacted by human trafficking restored into society, welcomed in the workplace, and thriving in community. As an agency providing services to survivors of human trafficking we support this bill which will expand expungement opportunities for Ohio's victims of human trafficking.

During our 14 years as a central Ohio anti-human trafficking agency we have seen a variety of services developed in hopes of aiding survivors of both labor and sex trafficking on their journeys toward restoration. From this perspective I can share that the barriers created by the legal system continue to create hurdles to individuals who look forward to moving on from the darkest chapter of their lives.

She Has A Name offers direct services to THRIVERS: people who have left exploitative circumstances, completed formal recovery programs, and are now leading in their communities. It has been a joy to share with the few who have completed the expungement process. These individuals go on to complete higher education degrees as we partner with them in offering academic scholarships. They lead agencies, start their own organizations, and meaningfully contribute to their neighborhoods. They start families, establish stable housing, and build supportive networks. With criminal records, none of this is accessible.

Strategies for Success is our academic scholarship for survivors of human trafficking. One of our 2024 scholarship recipients is graduating next month with a bachelor's degree and is enrolling to continue on to a master's program. A fellow scholarship recipient shared, "Receiving this scholarship has had a great impact on my life. First being, the incredible boost it gave my self esteem. Someone believed in me enough to award money towards my education. It provoked me to work harder at my studies and garner everything I could from the educational resources available to me because of the scholarship. It is another notch of freedom on this journey."

Our April Thacker Dream Scholarship funds whatever is next for survivors of human trafficking. One of our 2023 dream scholarship recipients launched a non-profit to provide street outreach to those still trapped in exploitation. She shared: "The generous funding [She Has A Name] poured into [my non-profit] has made my dream come to life! I'm ready to learn how to catapult my newly formed non-profit into a compassionate, survivor-led Street Outreach with the power to reach so many survivors like me."

These strong and inspirational people were able to grow beyond their past thanks to records expungement.

We are aware of many other survivors of human trafficking who aren't eligible to have their records expunged. This includes male survivors of sex trafficking and foreign national survivors of labor trafficking. With a criminal record they have limited choices for safe housing, stable jobs, and growth opportunities that empower them to move beyond trauma.

We are grateful to join the other proponents of this bill as supporters of an equitable justice system that looks to restore those who have suffered in the hands of exploitation. Thank you to Senator Kunze and the Ohio Senate for continuing to seek justice for victims of human trafficking.

Respectfully,
Courtney Schmackers
Executive Director



shehasaname.org | 605 North High Street #120 Columbus OH 43215 | 614.636.0421
She Has A Name is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. Tax ID: 83-1552393

