

Testimony Prepared for the
House Human Services Committee
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Senate Bill 2330: Relating to human trafficking and exploitation prevention and awareness education for students at public schools and tribal schools and provide an appropriation.

Good afternoon, Chairman Heinert and House Education Committee. I am Maurice Hardy a resident of District 30 and providing testimony on SB 2330 on behalf of myself and a friend and survivor who requested I speak to this bill. My background is in social work and rehabilitation counseling. I have worked with adolescents and adults my entire career. I received certification from Ohio University as a Sexual Offender Treatment Specialist and have worked with adolescent sex offenders. I have also served on a local school board and the state school board in the past.

Over the years I have attended various trainings and at one of them was one on human trafficking. At the time I was not working directly with offenders or victims and attended as it was most likely more interesting than the concurrent session being offered. I share this so you understand I was not 100% invested in the training.

Fast forward a couple of years I was working as a Home and Community Based Case manager and received a referral for a 40-something single lady who had suffered a stroke and was going to need some assistance in living independently in her apartment. This was a usual referral, and I had worked with many elderly and disabled in the same capacity. I didn't expect that I would meet a survivor of trafficking or what I would learn from her.

I went to "Matilda's" (not real name) apartment to complete my assessment. I entered and began my assessment like I have many times before. In conversation and gathering information Matilda used terms that were unfamiliar but reminded me of something. It was that training I was not 100% invested in. The terms; "The Life", "My Daddy", "Top" "Bottom". The "life" referring to the life lived by the victim and "daddy" as the owner. Mannerisms of not looking directly at me or my vicinity. My approach to the assessment changed to one of more caution and through that I found out Matilda had been trafficked since a young child and hadn't attended school past the first few weeks of 6th grade. Rough math Matilda had been in "the life" for well over 30 years.

In those 30 years, at least 2 traumatic brain injuries, broken bones and 4 unwanted pregnancies, numerous miscarriages and forced abortions. 2 of the 4 children were groomed into "the life" and have recently gotten out of "the life" but the lasting effects linger for all of them. Therapy and mannerisms that have an effect daily for them. The two children that were groomed were boys, and trafficked just like their mother was, and throughout the United States.

Matilda's break came when in one of the many states she was in, a detective recognized the signs of trafficking and took the initiative to help and find Matilda safety and resources. Because a person and law enforcement officer had the training and education to recognize and reach out.

I stress that it was a law enforcement officer as victims are trained, not taught, but trained not to trust law enforcement, social workers or anybody of authority. There is a power imbalance against the victim and a sense of mistrust of authority and belief they must comply for fear of reprisals.

I asked Matilda why, I a social worker and a male, was allowed into her apartment. Matilda's response, "I didn't know I had a choice."

This bill for adults will ensure that there will be more people knowing and recognizing the signs, these people will be in a place that may save a person from being trafficked and lose the life they should have had. For adolescents, education to help them recognize the signs of grooming for themselves or their friends will be another tool of safety and another barrier to prevent victims.

No one, I know, supports unfunded mandates and we should make sure this is adequately funded. I also feel teachers have been asked and burdened to do much more than educate our children and the provision for having nonprofit organization specializing in outreach, being survivor lead, and education will help.

As for training the predators through this, the ones I encountered had developed and, in a sense, mastered their grooming methods without any training. These predators have developed a sixth sense of who is a potential victim and how to pursue. It isn't always an abduction of the street; it can be a very methodical process using the many avenues available to them and the chosen victims. Matilda has told many times predators slang, tools of their trade and methods change to avoid detection and often. Training would need to be updated annually.

On behalf of "Matilda" and myself we ask this committee for a do pass on SB 2330.

I stand for questions.