

Delivered by Tami Brown Rodriguez
Director of Policy, Jaco Booyens Ministries

Good afternoon esteemed members of the committee,

I stand before you not just as the Director of Policy for Jaco Booyens Ministries, but as the aunt of a survivor. My niece was trafficked for 15 years—15 years of stolen innocence, of unimaginable pain, and of nights spent wondering if she would survive another day. Those years cannot be undone. Her smile, her childhood dreams, her sense of safety—snatched away by predators who thrived in the shadows of our collective silence and inaction.

Her story haunts me, not because it is extraordinary, but because it is heartbreakingly common. Thousands of children—precious sons and daughters—are preyed upon every single day. **The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children reports that 1 in 7 children online between the ages of 9 and 17 have been sexually solicited or approached by predators. By the time a child turns 14, a staggering number will have been propositioned online.** And for every one of them, there is a family like mine left to pick up the shattered pieces.

Meanwhile, predators are not few in number. **The FBI warns that at any given moment, there are over 750,000 predators online, searching for children to manipulate and exploit.** These are not theoretical risks. These are real dangers lurking behind every unregulated screen and every unsupervised app.

This bill is not just legislation—it is a lifeline. It is the chance to stop what happened to my niece from happening to another child. It is about giving students, parents, and educators the tools to fight back against traffickers who exploit vulnerabilities and manipulate through the faceless void of the internet. It is about ending the normalization of predatory behavior in our culture.

I have looked into the eyes of survivors, heard their trembling voices as they say, “If someone had told me what trafficking really was, I would have known I was a victim. I would have begged for help.” Those words stay with me. Because education isn’t just information—it is hope. It is survival. It is the difference between a child being enslaved and a child being saved.

We know what works. In North Dakota, SB 2330 ensures mandatory, comprehensive anti-trafficking education for every K-12 student and college freshman. It doesn’t just equip children; it empowers parents, trains faculty, and holds the system accountable. By contrast, Oklahoma’s HB 2396 made participation optional, and optional doesn’t protect children. Optional lets traffickers win.

The Supreme Court in the 1950s recognized that laws must evolve to meet new societal threats. Today, we face traffickers who don’t need to lurk in dark alleys—they invade through smartphones, social media, and online platforms. The battlefield has shifted, and our policies must catch up. We would never tolerate laws that leave children unprotected in the physical world. Why, then, would we allow loopholes that fail to guard them in the digital one?

We are in a dire situation. The predators are already in the room—with our children—hiding behind the glow of a screen. Will we leave them defenseless? Or will we act?

This bill represents what my niece never had—a chance. A chance to know, to fight, to survive. Let us not waste another moment. The stakes are too high. The cost of inaction is etched in the faces of countless victims, and the price is paid in the stolen lives of our children.

I urge you to act with courage. Let us not fail our children. Let us not fail their future.

Thank you,
Tami Brown Rodriguez
Family Member of a Survivor
Director of Policy & Licensing
Jaco Booyens Ministries
214-878-7825