

Testimony in Support of SB 2184
Senate Judiciary Committee
Shayla Davila: Co-Founder of Made Worthy LLC
Lived Experience Expert
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Chairmen and members of the committee:

For the record my name is Shayla Davila and I am a survivor of human trafficking and the Co-Founder of Made Worthy LLC. Made Worthy is the first and only human trafficking survivor owned and operated trafficking prevention and consulting company in North Dakota. I come to you today to share some of my experiences with the hope that it will help a survivor in the future.

Most people assume that when a survivor escapes their trafficking situation, that things go back to normal. This couldn't be further from the truth. While being trafficked, I endured many inhumane situations. Your decisions are no longer your own. When you wake up, when you have your first unwanted sexual interaction, when you eat, who you spend your day with and when you go to sleep. Many people take advantage of these freedoms and never think twice about them. Most just consider these things part of their daily routine. I had no choice but to endure because I wasn't just thinking about myself, my children were with me while I was trafficked. Being a parent you find you are willing to do anything to keep your children safe even if it compromises your morals. So when we were free I felt like I could finally breathe again. Those breaths didn't last for long.

Shortly after our escape I faced many challenges. Due to not being able to pass a background check because of charges I acquired while being trafficked, I was unable to get a decent job or housing for me and my children. Luckily at this point I was a survivor and surviving is what I knew how to do. I worked multiple jobs at bars and my children and myself lived at extended stay hotels. These were the only places that didn't require background checks. Eventually my children's biological father started making numerous false accusations to CPS (Child Protective Services) which led to my children being taken from me and placed in their father's care without a proper investigation. After CPS got the father's side, all they

saw was that I was a prostitute. It didn't matter that I was a victim, they didn't care to hear anything from me and that was that. To this day I can admit that the day my kids were taken, was the worst day of my life. All I could think about was everything I endured at the hands of my trafficker to keep my kids safe and then in a blink of an eye my kids were gone. I didn't understand why since I wasn't a bad mother. If anything I was a great mother who put her life on the line to keep her kids safe. I tried to explain to CPS that the claims were false and their father was the one who actually had a drug addiction, and that he made up all the claims just to get out of paying child support. But I was already labeled as a prostitute and CPS didn't even attempt to investigate. Instead of investigating I was threatened that if they find that I am making false accusations against him, I would be the one in trouble.

All of this led to a family friend coming up with the money for me to pay a retainer for an attorney. At that point a judge luckily ordered drug tests and spoke with the kids. I passed the tests and their father failed. I was then advised to contact the State Ombudsman due to my treatment by CPS. Long story short, the Ombudsman's investigation resulted in two CPS employees being relieved of their positions. This whole process took FOUR years. Four years I was away from my children. I was suppose to have supervised visitation but the children were never brought to the meet up. Had I not just been labeled and thrown away, and CPS had done a proper investigation none of this would've happened. My children and myself had already endured copious amounts of trauma before they were unjustly taken from me, and all taking them away did was make us all endure even more trauma.

I leave you with this ; My children and I never got any of this time back and that is what this bill will do for the next victim like myself. As a society do we want to be remembered for our efforts that kept families together and helped survivors and their children get their life back, or be remembered for not doing everything we could to prevent further trauma. I ask this Committee to think of survivors and pass this bill. Thank you for your time .