

## **Testimony in support of SB 2186**

### **Senate Judiciary Committee**

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**Lived Experience Expert**

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### **Chairmen and members of the committee.**

Thank you for having me today, my name is Ashley Glass, co-founder of Made Worthy LLC and I am here to testify in support of this bill alongside Shayla. From a survivor's perspective, we want to emphasize why passing this legislation is vital—not only to protect innocent children but also to repair the very broken systems that have failed countless families, including ours.

Shayla and I understand the consequences of a broken system all too well. Today we hope to take a step in repairing that brokenness. I think it's safe for me to say that even if we all do not agree on this bill, we can agree that human trafficking, in any form, is pure evil. It warps the mind, distorts reality, strips dignity and is a stealer of time.

Traffickers are master manipulators and for years, both Shayla and I lived as pawns in their twisted games. While our stories differ in many ways, they are rooted in the same evil. Each day began the same way—with a phone. It wasn't ours, but it was handed to us like a leash. This phone wasn't just a device; it was a tool of power and control, a constant reminder that our lives were no longer our own. The calls came endlessly, one after another and each ring was another demand, another transaction, another piece of ourselves sold. It benefits only the trafficker, while victims endure the most brutal, dehumanizing experiences to sustain it. We bore the cost—physically, emotionally, and mentally—while someone else reaped the profits.

But the trafficker's control extended far beyond those phone calls. We were always on the move, traveling from city to city, state to state, with no say in where we went or what we did. There was no stability, no sense of home—just a whirlwind of hotels, highways, and strangers. The trafficker dictated every aspect of our lives: where we went, how we dressed, who we saw, and what we had to do. Our only job was to comply, to keep the money flowing into their hands.

The constant travel wasn't just about making money; it was about keeping us disoriented, ensuring we couldn't form connections or seek help. In every new city, we were isolated, surrounded by unfamiliar faces and places. The trafficker made sure we had no resources, no way to reach out for help, no chance to escape. They controlled every dollar, every decision, every moment of our lives.

To the outside world, it may have looked like we were free—traveling, moving, seemingly independent. But freedom is an illusion when someone else holds all the power. That phone,

those endless calls, the constant travel—they were chains, invisible but unbreakable. They kept us tethered to a life we didn't choose and couldn't escape, a life where we were stripped of our humanity and reduced to nothing more than a source of profit.

And the truth is, once we escaped the grasp of our traffickers, we were not truly free because escaping a trafficker is only the first step. Survivors are immediately met with systemic challenges because proper laws and protections simply don't exist to support us. These laws must change.

Housing is hard to secure with gaps in our history. Employment feels out of reach when stigma and impossible background checks follow you. Even the legal system questioning our credibility, forcing us to fight for things we shouldn't have to prove, like our right to parent our own children.

These barriers aren't accidental—they exist because our laws don't reflect the realities survivors face. Without tailored protections, we're left to navigate a system that wasn't built to help us rebuild. Real change starts with addressing these gaps and creating laws that uplift survivors rather than hold them back. Shayla and I have endured years of horror, followed by years of fighting to rebuild our lives and reclaim our roles as mothers.

During those years, we faced the fallout—multiple CPS cases opened without merit. These investigations were often weaponized by others, leveraging our “backgrounds” to justify their claims. Time and time again, the cases were closed with no findings of abuse, but the damage was already done. Time with our children—precious, irreplaceable time—was taken and no one was held accountable.

Just as traffickers manipulate and groom their victims, severing them from those they love most. The same tactics can be seen in cases of false accusations in family courts. When one parent accuses the other of being unfit without evidence, they manipulate and groom their children into believing that the other parent is unsafe or abusive. These accusations trigger CPS investigations, consuming valuable resources and unfairly depriving the accused parent of precious time with their child. While the system is meant to protect children, it's vital that CPS conducts their work with accuracy, diligence, and fairness.

Thorough investigations are essential to ensure that children are truly safeguarded against abuse and that families are not torn apart unnecessarily. The focus must always remain on the child's best interest, supported by an approach that is both careful and just. Moreover, this system should never be weaponized by abusers as a tool to further victimize or intimidate their targets through fear tactics. Protecting children must remain the priority, and this can only be achieved through a careful, just, and balanced process that prioritizes truth and fairness above all.

So you see this isn't just a survivor's issue; it's a parental issue, a CPS issue, and a judicial issue. False accusations weaponize systems meant to protect, allowing one parent to manipulate the truth and drive a wedge between a child and their other parent. These baseless claims waste critical resources like CPS investigators time, law enforcement repeated engagement, and

clogged court systems. Most importantly, they rob children of the stability, love, and connection they need to thrive.

This legislation will require parents to pause and ask themselves: Is this truly a case of abuse, or is it simply a difference in parenting styles? It will discourage false accusations and help restore balance to a system that has long been weaponized against good parents.

We must take back the family unit, stop promoting its discord, and allow parents—especially those who have been unfairly denied time with their children—to rebuild and restore those bonds. Passing this bill is not just about legislative reform; it's about healing families, protecting children, and creating a future where survivors like Shayla and I don't have to keep fighting the same battles long after escaping our traffickers.

We are hopeful that after hearing our testimony—and the testimonies of others—you will agree: Passing this bill is a step in the right direction.

Thank you.