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STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 41
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Senate Judiciary Committee
8:30 AM, Hearing Rm 343

HB 3040A

Chair Prozanski and members of the committee,

For the record, I am State Representative Kathleen Taylor, representing Milwaukie, Oak Gove and parts of Southeast Portland. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about House Bill 3040A, relating to hearsay evidence in sex trafficking cases.

Rep. John Huffman and I participated in the interim workgroup on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. Those meetings had a wide variety of stakeholders -- Sen. Ron Wyden, Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum, Commissioner Diane McKeel, as well as law enforcement, agency personnel, health professionals, child advocates and more.

The Multnomah County District Attorneys brought forth the concept for the original version of HB 3040, which would allow the admissibility of certain hearsay statements as evidence in sex trafficking cases. It was modeled after a hearsay exception for victims of domestic violence, already in statute.

Not unlike DV victims, sex trafficked individuals are often frightened, have left town, or are otherwise unavailable by the time of trial. They often recant earlier statements about traffickers. This bill would have given prosecutors more tools to convict traffickers and abusers who prey on these vulnerable women.

Unfortunately, the crime of sex trafficking has some technical issues that are different from domestic violence issues.

So HB 3040A asks the Oregon Law Commission to review this issue and make recommendations about language for a hearsay exception for sex trafficking. They have the skill and expertise to craft language that takes into account the nuances in sex trafficking cases.

Just yesterday, I heard from the Law Commission that the time frame outlined might be too aggressive. So we're certainly willing to work with them to make that more manageable if necessary.

But, prosecuting sex traffickers is an unpleasant and technically difficult endeavor. We need to give prosecutors the tools they need to put these offenders in jail.

The bill passed the House floor with no opposition. I urge you to support HB 3040.