

April 25, 2017

The Honorable Chair Barker  
Chair, House Judiciary Committee  
900 Court St NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Barker and Members of the Committee,

The Oregon Women's Health and Wellness Alliance, a group of legislators, health care personnel, state and local agency staff and citizen advocates dedicated to promoting the health, safety and economic well-being of women, supports SB 249 and SB 250.

Sex trafficking is a problem throughout the United States, this is true in Oregon as well. The National Human Trafficking Hotline reported that 300 calls originated in Oregon in 2016. This is an increase of more than 50 calls from the previous year. Human trafficking disproportionately affects women who are often forced into sex trafficking. When survivors of sex trafficking attempt to rebuild their lives our judicial system can create barriers that make this even more difficult.

Senate Bill 249 and Senate Bill 250 works to eliminate these barriers. These bills provide survivors, charged or convicted of prostitution resulting from exploitation, with the ability to prevent or remove the charges from their record. SB 249 provides a process to vacate prostitution convictions when the person was a victim of sex trafficking at the time of the incident, while SB 250 creates an affirmative defense for prostitution if the defendant provides evidence that they are a victim of sex trafficking.

Victims of sex trafficking should not become victims of our judicial system. It is unjust that a person who has been trafficked is punished by the law after suffering the worst kind of exploitation. These bills provide a fair way for victims of trafficking to avoid prosecution or the ability to clear their names. These bills decrease the challenges many survivors face allowing them the opportunity to take control and achieve a brighter future. We urge you to support SB 249 and SB 250.

Sincerely,

The OWHWA Co-Chairs:



Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward



Representative Karin Power



Senator Kathleen Taylor



Representative Alissa Keny-Guyer