
To: Chair Prozanski
Vice-Chair Thatcher
Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot 110 Measure Implementation

From: Shannon Rose on Behalf of Multnomah County Department of Human Services and the
Domestic and Sexual Violence Coordination Office

RE: SB 274: Protections for Sex Trafficked Minors

On behalf of the Multnomah County Department of Human Services (DCHS), I submit this written testimony in support of SB 274: a bill that would provide crucial protections for minors who are victims of sex trafficking.

Oregon law stipulates that minors cannot consent to sex. Yet, ORS Chapter 419C allows minors to be charged, detained, and prosecuted for prostitution. Overwhelming data shows minors who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color are disproportionately sextrafficked. These minors who are forced and coerced to trade sex are victims of sex trafficking and our state policies must ensure that they are treated as victims of crime, not as criminals themselves.

There is ample evidence to show us that criminalization, no matter the intent, is traumatizing to people, and this is compounded by the racial disparities present in both our criminal justice system and in sex trafficking victimization. Our community is telling us that there is a better way to help intervene in sex trafficking and their expert voices are supported by the research. If we are to truly prioritize those most impacted by this crime and those historically excluded from policy guidance - our BIPOC community members - we must listen to the evidence on this issue and commit to stopping further traumatization by treating these minors as though they have broken the law.

Trauma-informed, culturally relevant, and survivor-driven services - not criminalization - are the key to assisting victims of sex trafficking. SB 274 provides an opportunity to begin to repair some of the systemic harm experienced by survivors of sex trafficking and to shift our focus on investing in data-driven, survivor-guided community programs that can aid victims in finding a path to safety. Further, we hear from survivors and community service providers that starting with supportive services as the intervention increases the likelihood that victims will want to partner with law enforcement in cases of investigation and prosecution of those committing trafficking. Clearly, ending criminalization is a way for all of those impacted and concerned about the sex trafficking of minors to see success.

We are asking you to support SB 274 and let victims of sex trafficking - especially BIPOC victims - that you are committed to ending this form of criminalization and further traumatization in favor of a more supportive and comprehensive approach.

Thank you,

Shannon Rose
Senior Program Specialist
shannon.rose@multco.us | 503-988-6537
Domestic & Sexual Violence Coordination Office
Multnomah County Department of Human Services
209 SW 4th Ave. Suite 200
Portland, OR 97204