



Jessica Vega Pederson
Multnomah County Commissioner

501 SE Hawthorne Blvd., Suite 600
Portland, Oregon 97214
Phone: (503) 988-5217
Email: district3@multco.us

March 30th, 2021

Dear Chair Prozanski and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation,

Today I write to you in support of Senate Bill 274, which would prohibit criminally charging and arresting a child who has experienced commercial sexual exploitation (CSE).

As the former chair of the Multnomah County Sex Trafficking Collaborative, I understand how critical it is to redefine how local jurisdictions engage with youth CSE survivors. SB 274 protects vulnerable young people across Oregon from unnecessary and traumatizing involvement with the legal system.

Where our legal system interacts with young survivors of sex trafficking, it should seek to rehabilitate *not* criminalize them. These young people are victims of crimes committed against them. Prosecuting and detaining a minor who has experienced commercial sex trafficking further traumatizes the minor. Additionally, this bill aims to reduce the amount of negative and harmful interactions between CSE survivors and law enforcement.

Because sex trafficking disproportionately impacts Black and Brown youth, this bill would provide additional protection for these populations from the debilitating and long-lasting effects of being incarcerated.

I am proud to work within a County that is embracing survivor-centered and trauma-informed approaches to ending sex trafficking among adults and youth. Multnomah County convenes a monthly Sex Trafficking Collaborative which brings together support service providers, law enforcement leaders, policymakers, survivors, and allies to better understand the scope of commercial sexual exploitation within our county.

From July 2020 to January 2021, 539 survivors of sex trafficking came into contact with Multnomah County's justice system. None of these youth survivors should have been detained or seen as criminals, as we know this does not address the root causes of CSE.

Our community is in dire need of legislation like SB 274 that will get rid of the ability to criminalize exploited youth and replace prosecution with supportive services that will assist survivors. I urge you to support SB 274.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica Vega Pederson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jessica Vega Pederson
Commissioner, District Three
Multnomah County Board of Commissioners