



Testimony for the Senate Judiciary Committee

Topic: SB 373

Submitted by Lucy Bloom, Executive Director, Veronica's Voice

March 11, 2020

Chairperson Representative Fred Patton and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the topic of Human Trafficking in Kansas. I am a survivor of Human Trafficking, before it was recognized as the atrocity that it is today. Veronica's Voice was founded to help the women whose lives have been ravaged by this societal ill 20 years ago and has been empowering women to exit, preventing entry into, and seeking to end demand for commercial sex acts since that time. Veronica's Voice has served over 8,000 women and girls (and some men and boys), ranging in age from twelve to 60, who are being exploited in the commercial sex trade.

In 2012, Attorney General Schmidt led a team to put into place legislation that would provide protection and services to victims of commercial sexual exploitation. In order to address the stigma of the word "prostitution", and to promote an environment where persons experiencing commercial sexual exploitation could access needed services, the word "prostitution" was removed from Kansas Statute. While we agree with the intent, the language that was used to replace "prostitution", being "sexual relations", does not accurately convey the nature of this crime.

In 2019, Veronica's Voice proposed a language change to Attorney General Schmidt, from "sexual relations" to "commercial sex act". As the Attorney General's legislative committee reviewed the recommendation, the language was simplified to "sex act", and gained unanimous support from the Attorney General's Human Trafficking Advisory Board. We are pleased to see the unanimous vote from the Senate in support of the language change.

Replacing "sexual relations" with "sex act" provides a clearer context for addressing crimes of commercial sexual exploitation.

There is still more work to be done to create a Kansas where all are free. This is a step in the right direction. Thank you for your time.

The Voice of the Sexually Exploited