



RE: Testimony in support of H7649, Uniform Act on Prevention of and Remedies for Human Trafficking

Dear Chair McEntee and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **strong support of House Bill 7649** which would require that fines collected from businesses failing to adhere to posting critical signage related to human trafficking under the Uniform Act on Prevention of and Remedies for Human Trafficking are deposited into the violent crimes indemnity account within the general fund.

For 50 years, Sojourner House, a non-profit based in Providence but now providing services across the state, has served thousands of victims and survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, and human trafficking. We offer wraparound services such as support groups, emergency shelter, transitional and permanent supportive housing, sexual health advocacy, and emotional support. We believe that everyone deserves a safe, healthy home, and proudly house all genders.

Human trafficking is often referred to as a “hidden crime” because victims rarely self-identify or seek help due to fear, isolation, or coercion.ⁱ Education and awareness help members of the public, frontline workers, and transportation staff recognize potential indicators and report concerns to authorities, which is crucial for intervention and rescue.ⁱⁱ

Displaying public-awareness signage with hotline numbers (e.g., National Human Trafficking Hotline) and reporting information provides a direct, accessible pathway for victims and witnesses to get help. Signage posted in places where trafficking may occur such as transportation hubs, rest areas, hospitals, or businesses makes essential information visible to people who may not otherwise know where to turn for help.ⁱⁱⁱ

Public safety campaigns indicate that when people are informed about human trafficking indicators and reporting channels, community vigilance increases, which strengthens the first line of defense against trafficking. Requiring signage with a penalty for non-compliance ensures that employers and public facilities actually display the awareness information rather than assuming voluntary implementation will occur. When signs are mandatory and enforced, they are more likely to be consistently posted in key locations and increasing exposure to critical resources and lifesaving information.

Human trafficking survivors often need substantial support in the time following trafficking experiences.^{iv,v} Community accountability for human trafficking at the expense of relevant businesses is essential to funding support for survivors. House Bill 7649 importantly recognizes the necessity of funds to support fleeing experiences of human trafficking while continuing to hold businesses that intersect with trafficking accountable to the benefit of our greater Rhode Island community. **We hope that the Committee will recognize the significance of the proposed legislation in H7649 and work to support and push this bill forward.**

ⁱ Healy, A. E. (2023). "They never self-identify": Victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation, the Island of Ireland (pp.279-296). In B. Gornicka & M. Doyle (Eds.) *Sex and Sexualities in Ireland*. Palgrave MacMillan.

ⁱⁱ The Law Institute (13 December, 2025). Understanding human trafficking: Essential general indicators to identify human trafficking.

<https://thelaw.institute/understanding-human-trafficking/essential-indicators-identify-human-trafficking/>

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Transportation (n.d.). Transportation leaders against human trafficking counter-trafficking posters. <https://www.transportation.gov/stop-human-trafficking/transportation-leaders-against-human-trafficking-counter-trafficking-0>

^{iv} Okech, D., Hansen, N., Howard, W., Anarfi, J. K., & Burns, A. C. (2018). Social support, dysfunctional coping, and community reintegration as predictors of PRSD among human trafficking survivors. *Behavioral Medicine*, 44(3), 209-2018. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08964289.2018.1432553>

^v Davy, D. (2015). Understanding the support needs of human-trafficking victims: A review of three human-trafficking program evaluations. *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 1(4), 318-337. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2015.1090865>