

SOAR INSTITUTE

April 22, 2025

Memo in Support of H5878; Access to Public Records

We at the SOAR Institute support H5878, legislation that amends the list of exceptions for public disclosure of law enforcement records to include protection of individuals who may have been victims of human trafficking or otherwise qualify for an affirmative defense for prostitution-related crimes.

We are longtime advocates for survivors of human trafficking with over two decades of experience providing legal and mental health support to survivors, so we are uniquely positioned to understand the vital protections this legislation creates for our clients. Our organization also provides capacity building to grassroots organizations working with sex workers, so we have a birds-eye view of the many ways this legislation affects our communities.

We have worked to ensure that survivors of human trafficking and exploitation are protected from their identities being shared publicly due to safety concerns, as well as continuing stigmatization of individuals in the sex trade. This legislation would add a layer of protection for the most vulnerable individuals.

We do wish to note that the term “suspect” next to “victim of human trafficking” should highlight the deeply problematic nature of criminalization of survivors. This is a larger policy issue that we, along with many allies in the sex worker and human trafficking advocacy space, will continue to fight.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

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