



RICHARD CORDRAY  
OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL

April 28, 2010

The Honorable Tim Grendell  
Chairman, Criminal Justice Committee  
Ohio Senate  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

**RE: Letter of Support for Senate Bill 235**

Dear Senator Grendell et al:

I write today to offer my support for Senate Bill 235. This legislation advances the fight against human trafficking by strengthening the ability to bring to justice those who choose to enslave others in Ohio. As the work of the Trafficking In Persons Study Commission has clearly illustrated, this problem is very real and one that deserves our attention.

Over the past year, the Trafficking in Persons Study Commission has been working to build a greater understanding of the scope of this issue and to identify the responses that are necessary to combat it. It is with thanks to the dedicated efforts of the elected officials, law enforcement, prosecutors, survivors, advocates, state agencies, and service providers who are members of the Commission that we are already producing results which have increased the public's awareness of human trafficking.

Our Research and Analysis sub-committee, under the leadership of Dr. Celia Williamson from the University of Toledo, utilized existing research and developed new models that made clear human trafficking is an unfortunate reality today in Ohio. We now have conservative estimates that tell us there are nearly 3,500 foreign born persons who may be at-risk for both labor and or sex trafficking, nearly 800 of which are estimated to currently be trafficked. In terms of American born youth in Ohio, nearly 3,000 were found to be at-risk for sex trafficking, and just over another thousand have been trafficked into the sex trade over the course of a year. The report also illustrated that stronger laws are needed as Ohio is both a source and destination state for victims of human trafficking. Foreign born individuals are brought into Ohio for labor or sexual purposes and Ohio born youth have become victims of sexual exploitation across the country.

Building on the research report, the Legal and Legislative sub-committee, under the leadership of Judge Peter Sikora, recently released its recommendations to strengthen Ohio's criminal laws to better address human trafficking. The sub-committee's recommendations represent a consensus between county prosecutors, victims' advocates, and legislators, a consensus that had not been achieved in past general assemblies. These recommendations were

designed to achieve the shared goals of seeing that all human trafficking conduct is covered under state criminal statutes, that all criminal penalties are appropriate and that the law is clear.

The sub-committee put forth seven specific recommendations. The first, which is reflected in SB 235, calls for the creation of a new offense of trafficking in persons that would be a second degree felony, punishable by up to eight years in prison. This is a very important step forward and we strongly support that key legislative change. In addition, I urge you and the members of the Criminal Justice Committee to consider amending SB 235 to include the complete comprehensive package of consensus recommendations that would:

- Amend the existing compelling prostitution statute to better fight those who seek to exploit children
- Ensure labor trafficking is covered under the law
- Strengthen existing laws regarding kidnapping and abduction
- Create a new offense to punish those that confiscate identification documents to further human trafficking.
- Expand the applicability of the existing human trafficking specification, and make it easier for prosecutors to apply.

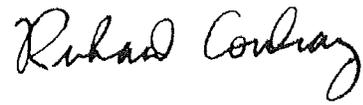
A copy of the Legal and Legislative Sub-Committee report that includes detailed descriptions of each recommendation is attached for your reference.

In urging you to consider these amendments, I do not intend to be presumptuous or to “micro-manage” your best judgments about legislative procedures and strategy. If you prefer to move the bill in its current form, pass it in the Senate, and then have the House consider whether to add any of the amendments, we are agreeable to that approach. In short, we are fully supportive of how ever you choose to proceed with this bill. We simply want to see it proceed, and to be helpful to you any way we can toward that objective.

While the passage for SB 235 would represent a significant step forward, we recognize that new criminal laws alone will not address the totality of this wide-ranging problem in Ohio. The members of the Trafficking In Persons Study Commission are still hard at work looking at ways to increase the level of training for those most likely to encounter human trafficking victims, improve general awareness of human trafficking and how to obtain help, enhance the availability of supportive services to aid victims in their recovery and ensure that statistical data is available so that the scope of the problem in Ohio can continue to be monitored.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer my support for SB 235. By taking action to advance this legislation, you and your colleagues will be sending a strong statement against human trafficking in Ohio. I look forward to working with you in the future as the Trafficking In Persons Study Commission continues its efforts to identify additional steps that should be taken to address this reprehensible activity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Cordray". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard Cordray  
Ohio Attorney General

Enclosure

cc: Members of the Senate Judiciary-Criminal Justice Committee

Members of the Trafficking In Persons Study Commission