Ohio Council of Churches

Testimony Supporting S.B. 235
Senate Criminal Justice Committee
Chairman Timothy Grendell
April 14, 2010

The Ohio Council of Churches strongly supports Senate Bill 235 sponsored by Senator Fedor and Chairman Grendell. The legislation will bring Ohio in line with 43 other states that have already adopted felony-level language for human trafficking as enacted under federal standards. It is unacceptable to be made aware of so many children being bought and sold in Ohio right under our noses and not to try and do something about it. I also thank Attorney General Richard Cordray for the report by his study commission that unveiled the depth of the problem.

The Ohio Senate is to be commended for moving quickly and in a bi-partisan fashion to create this legislation mandating a stand-alone second degree felony to aid and encourage the prosecution of the predators that would commit these acts.

I believe Ohioans would be alarmed to know that Toledo has become a haven for such trafficking. It was surprising to me that human trafficking is the second largest illegal enterprise in the world following only illegal drug sales. It is shameful that our country is estimated to be the second largest destination country for women and children trafficked into the sex industry.

The majority of victims are between 18 and 24 years of age. 95% of all victims experience physical or sexual violence during trafficking. 43% of victims are used for forced commercial sexual exploitation, of which 98% are women and young girls.

The estimated global annual profits made from the exploitation of all trafficked forced labor are $31.6 billion of which nearly 50% comes from industrialized economies.

The most upsetting statistic that I have heard is that in 2006, there were only 5808 prosecutions and 3160 convictions throughout the world. This means for every 800 victims trafficked only one person was convicted in 2006.

According to a Rand Corporation study , Toledo , Ohio is a hotbed citing weak laws, a growing demand for cheap labor, and Ohio's proximity to the Canadian border.

Because of the eminent threat to young Ohioans, we believe that this legislation is important and hope that it moves quickly through the legislative process.

Thank you for this opportunity to present our thoughts about reducing human trafficking in Ohio.

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