



Oregon Commission For Women

Advocating for Equity and Diversity throughout Oregon

Good morning, Chair Porzanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

I am Natasha Haunsperger, a Co-Chair of the Oregon Commission for Women (OCFW), and in my other role, I am also a Police Officer with the Portland Police bureau.

OCFW works for the implementation and establishment of economic, social, legal, and political equity for all women in the state of Oregon and to maintain a continuing assessment of issues and needs confronting women in this state. OCFW has several statutory duties, all of which revolve around advocacy and equity.

I firmly express my support and endorsement of SB 745 directing juvenile departments to ensure that youth taken into custody receive sex trafficking screening and are assigned an advocate. Nevertheless, it also directs the Department of Justice to develop and implement mandatory training and education of its staff about sex trafficking.

SB 745 provides a holistic and comprehensive approach to the problem of minor victims of sex trafficking. Recognizing that youth taken into the custody of juvenile departments could potentially be victims of commercial sex trafficking is a significant step toward removing existing institutional and systems barriers to timely and proactive identification of victims of human trafficking.

I know, from my extensive professional experience as a police officer, that timely and proactive identification of human trafficking victims remains a big challenge for not just the justice system but for our collective society. The complex and hidden nature of human trafficking crimes, coupled with the lack of systems and societal awareness and education, and skills to see “beneath the service,” often leads to unintended harm and consequences – missed opportunities to identify and assist victims of human trafficking.

Conducting human trafficking screening of youth in custody could lead to identifying victims and aborting the cycle of re-victimization of the most vulnerable demographic.

The emerging research on human trafficking shows that many victims of human trafficking are forced to commit criminal offenses under duress, threats of harm, and intimidation. I interviewed human trafficking victims who disclosed that their trafficker forced them to sell drugs, steal merchandise and commit fraud. These victims had no choice but to commit criminal acts to survive.

Oregon Commission for Women

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The criminal justice system might respond by addressing criminal behavior. Still, unless asked additional questions to understand one's behavior and decision-making better, we, as the justice system, will unintentionally miss the fleeting moment to identify victims of human trafficking.

Taking into consideration the biology of trauma, we know that victims of human trafficking often suffer from prolonged and deeply rooted trauma, abuse, and victimization. They rarely, if ever, self-identify and self-report.

In 2013, the United States Attorney's Office in Oregon commissioned PSU to conduct a pioneering study on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) in the Portland metro area. The study collected and analyzed trafficking data and, for the first time, uncovered the scope of the sex trafficking of minors in Portland.¹

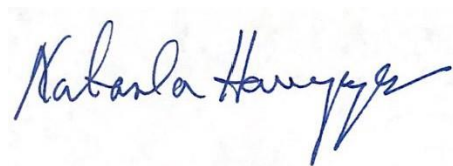
The PSU study highlighted information collected by the Department of Human Services, indicating that a total of 469 child victims of sex trafficking were identified during the period 2009–2013.² This research not only highlighted the prevalence of sex trafficking but also, more importantly, represented the first academic study to illuminate profiles and demographics of trafficked minors. According to this report, many runaway youths were exploited and abused by their traffickers. Thus, is it reasonable to assume that, at some point, juvenile department sector employees will encounter and serve such victims.

The onus is on us, the systems' providers, to proactively recognize red flags of sex trafficking, ask the right questions, and build access to support, resources, and an improved response that these victims so desperately need and have the right to, as outlined by the Federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act in 2000.

From a public health perspective, human trafficking is the foremost issue of gender rights and healthcare rights. This would allow for proper response to serving victims of crime and victims of such horrific trauma. It would also provide specific information and data to assess how the system misses victims of trafficking and provide opportunities for more research and evaluation of current responses to identify gaps and opportunities

Additionally, introducing such screening practices would allow for integrating and raising awareness of this issue with the Department of Corrections, engaging those entities, and collectively addressing and combating human trafficking. After all, human trafficking is a collective responsibility requiring various stakeholders who might be in the best position to timely and proactively identify to do their part and duty.


On behalf of OCFW, and as a concerned citizen who has dedicated her life to making our state safer, I urge the Committee to pass SB 745 and help protect our children.




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