



2/1/2023

Re: SB 745

Senate Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Sarah Nedeau, the Senior Director of Programs at New Avenues for Youth and overseeing the New Day program, and I am submitting testimony on our agency's behalf opposing SB 745 as it is currently constructed. New Day is a mentorship, advocacy, housing, economic empowerment, and prevention program for youth ages 12-25 who have experienced sex trafficking or whom are at significant risk. We are a partnership between New Avenues for Youth, Call to Safety, Raphael House, Self Enhancement Inc., El Programa Hispano, and VOA HomeFree. Since our beginning in 2018, we have worked with over 500 self-identified youth survivors in our voluntary program. I, personally, have been working with youth survivors for my entire career since 2011 in a variety of contexts- shelter and housing, advocacy, mentorship, outreach, prevention.

We absolutely agree that there needs to be more attention and effort to identify, assess, and connect youth in custody with specialized supportive services. **And we do have some reservations based on the legislation as drafted that are as follows and to be submitted as testimony in opposition.**

Our primary concern is that despite good intentions, the impact could mean more youth embedded and harmed in the justice system and without adequate and comprehensive resources to respond. Practically, there is not enough resource for this endeavor; this does not provide for informed consent or choice for youth survivors and will deter trust. **Youth survivors deserve legislation that fully accounts for any and all impact.** We recognize the position we're in as a program located in Multnomah County which has more resources than our counterparts across the State, and we have deep relationship with providers in other rural areas that share our concerns. To direct so much of this responsibility to the DOJ- a punitive system, is not aligned with our shared values and collective vision of survivor-centered support through community responsibility and effort.

The unintended impacts we foresee:

1. **More youth in a punitive system without comprehensive support.**

Screening youth for ST/CSEC is important to be able to identify, respond and connect youth to specialized services. Should this be implemented too broadly in the justice system, however, may result in significantly more youth being under judicial scrutiny and long-term systems-involvement that can have compounding negative consequence when a less intensive intervention would have been more



beneficial, as well as increased resource need in carceral settings or in pre- and post-adjudicated supervision rather than prevention or less harmful intervention techniques.

- a. Training provided solely by DOJ, or any singular entity or system, is not comprehensive in terms of nuance of indicators, experience or approaches that include equity lenses and harm reduction. And there is a resource constraint in terms of availability.
2. **Not enough advocacy resource to respond.** Capacity of systems-based advocates is already constrained, so pairing with this resource would not provide the adequate level of in-depth support that is intended without additional funding. Additionally, only offering systems-based advocacy through DHS and OYA determination, and not confidential advocacy, which is also constrained in terms of capacity and resource, lacks informed consent and a critical support to survivors of all ages. Systems-based advocacy alone without option for community-based and confidential advocacy can further erode trust in any supports, relating to longer term involvement, harm through exploitation, and further recidivism or tangential criminalization.
 - a. Further, we know that having support from advocates that have shared lived experience is crucial to working through trauma and building trust with systems. Typically, the barriers to systems-based work such as rigorous screening and historical impact preclude those with lived experience from positions in systems-based advocacy work and we see more representation in community-based services.
3. **Victims will be charged as criminals.** There is no guarantee that youth will not be charged with prostitution or related charges when they are a victim as would have been addressed by SB 274 in sessions past.

We propose some additions and alternatives:

1. **Funding** for advocates and training- system-based and multiple community-based agencies.
2. **A workgroup including at least 3 community-based confidential advocacy programs that are VAWA compliant**, that includes a rural organization, an urban organization, and a culturally-specific organization, to develop any and all screening methods and collaborate in trainings as well as in facilitation.
 - a. Screening for “risk” and giving the option to connect to a community based or systems-based advocate, each decision must be documented and youth would sign off they were offered multiple options to ensure informed consent and determination.
3. **Including that proposed in SB274** to guarantee youth who are victims will not be criminalized due to identification and/or advocate intervention route proposed.



We know that coordination across these systems and with these lenses, perspective and approaches is invaluable as we navigate and address these extremely complex issues. As part of the CSEC workgroup and at the behest of Senator Taylor, we look forward to participating in and collaborating on any further drafting of amendments as well as in future initial legislation ideation and proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sarah Nedeau", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Sarah Nedeau
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