

Trafficking Law Center

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May 15, 2023

TO: House Judiciary Committee

RE: Written testimony of Joel Shapiro, Executive Director of the Trafficking Law Center,
in support of SB 745

Chair Kropf and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

The Trafficking Law Center strongly supports SB 745. The Trafficking Law Center (TLC) works to support human trafficking victims and survivors by providing *pro bono* legal services, training attorneys, and educating the public and policymakers on human trafficking issues.

By requiring the screening of youths to determine whether they are victims of sex trafficking, SB 745 addresses a very important need. I want to thank and commend Senator Taylor for introducing this bill, and for her long-standing commitment to fighting sex trafficking and supporting victims.

Identifying sex trafficking victims has long been recognized as a very difficult challenge for many reasons. It's a truism that you can't identify something if you don't know what you're looking for. Far too many professionals in relevant fields, such as medicine, teaching, and law, as well as in social service agencies, lack adequate training and knowledge on the indicators of sex trafficking.

Survivors of sex trafficking often recount interactions with service providers during which the providers fail to realize the survivor was being trafficked at the time, and without asking questions that might have raised red flags. Without this recognition, of course, victims don't receive the attention and resources needed. SB 745 will directly address this problem by providing training for juvenile justice workers so that they will know the right questions to ask – a necessary first step for identifying and helping minor sex trafficking victims.

The 2013 study conducted by Portland State University Professor Chris Carey found that 469 trafficked minors had received social services in the Portland area in a five-year span. Certainly many other trafficked minors were never identified and provided with services. We also know that minors children from minority populations are at a higher risk for recruitment into sex trafficking, particularly those with unstable families and those who've experienced sexual abuse.

Many minors taken into the custody of the juvenile department fall into these risk categories. And if they have been trafficked, they likely need greater services to respond to the complex trauma they've suffered. Without proper screening for sex trafficking, their needs will not be addressed and they are highly likely to require state resources for many years. By facilitating early intervention, SB 745 will help the State of Oregon deploy resources in a more timely, efficient, and effective manner, and deliver the services that this children need. Please support this vital bill.