

## Trafficking Law Center

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May 8, 2025

TO: Senate Judiciary Committee

RE: Written testimony of Joel Shapiro, Executive Director of the Trafficking Law Center,  
in support of HB 3819-A

Chair Prozanski and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

This testimony on behalf of the Trafficking Law Center (TLC) is submitted in support of HB 3819-A. 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.

Thank you to Rep. Tran and Sen. Taylor for all their dedicated work to craft HB 3819-A, which is an important step forward in addressing the scourge of illicit massage businesses (IMBs) in Oregon. The anti-trafficking movement nationally has been working to raise awareness of IMBs for quite some time. In Oregon, the number of IMBs has increased dramatically in recent years and has brought greater awareness to this problem locally.

In Oregon over the past decade, tremendous progress has been made in understanding human trafficking, marshaling resources, and coordinating responses through the Oregon Department of Justice Trafficking Intervention Advisory Committee, the Multnomah County Sex Trafficking Collaborative, and other County and regional task forces. Counter to many people's beliefs, the vast majority of trafficking victims in Oregon are U.S. citizens, and many have not crossed state or national borders. Most of the resources available in Oregon were designed to address this population. However, the victims encountered in IMBs are foreign victims brought in from Asia, and the investigative and victim support resources available are simply not sufficient.

IMBs operate very differently from the majority of trafficking situations that law enforcement in Oregon investigate and prosecute. In talking with law enforcement officers about this problem, it is clear that stopping exploitation through IMBs presents a great challenge. This is not because IMBs are difficult to identify. It is because those operating and profiting from the enterprise insulate themselves and they are hard to identify and apprehend. Tackling such investigations, in comparison to more conventional trafficking cases, requires a much greater level of resources and the coordination of multi-disciplinary teams if there is to be success in prosecuting the operators.

HB 3819-A provides new tools to warn consumers about IMBs and to hold operators accountable through civil fines and criminal charges. I am concerned, however, that without increased resources, these tools will not be utilized. It is beyond the authority of the Legislature, of course, to set the level of resource devoted to enforcement by the State Board of Massage Therapists or to determine the investigatory priorities of local law enforcement agencies. But it is those initiatives that will determine the efficacy of HB 3819-A. I hope this testimony will encourage those authorities to devote greater resources and efforts to closing IMBs and serving their victims.