

Good afternoon Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Bonham, and esteemed members of the committee,

My name is Jay Benke and I am a child abduction and sex trafficking survivor. I have the privilege of being here today as a representative for the Sex Trade Survivor Caucus. We are an all survivor, multi partisan body of people who have experienced being bought and sold for sex acts. Our mission is to ensure survivors inform the policies that shape the lives and futures of victims and survivors.

I'm here today in strong support of House Bill 3582 because it addresses a painful and persistent reality for many survivors: time runs out before we're even able to name what happened to us, let alone seek justice.

Survivors of sexual assault and exploitation often live in silence for years, not because we are unwilling to come forward, but because trauma, grooming, shame, and fear delay our ability to fully understand and disclose our experiences.

Personally, it took me more than 20 years to name my own experience for what it was. Like so many others, I carried the weight of self-blame for things that were never my fault. This is not uncommon.

Child sexual abuse and sex trafficking are deeply interconnected. Many individuals who are trafficked for sex were first victimized as children. Early abuse can normalize exploitation, blur the understanding of consent, and make children especially vulnerable to grooming by traffickers. In reality, sex trafficking is frequently a continuation of childhood sexual abuse, just with different players and higher stakes. To effectively combat trafficking, we must employ real prevention strategies, and that means holding child sex predators accountable as a deterrent. HB 3582 is a proactive measure to disrupt the pipeline of exploitation before it starts.

I respectfully urge your support of HB 3582. Thank you for considering the realities of those most impacted.