



**February 7, 2026**

Representative Thuy Tran  
Oregon House of Representatives  
900 Court St. NE, H-285  
Salem, Oregon 97301

**Memorandum in Support of HB 4157, Hearsay Exception to Protect Trafficking Survivors**

Dear Representative Tran and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I write on behalf of World Without Exploitation, the nation's largest anti-sex trafficking coalition of over 175 partner organizations, including coalition partners in Oregon. We work together to advocate for survivor-centered policy, empower survivors to engage and lead in anti-trafficking work, and educate the public about the realities of commercial sexual exploitation.

We exclaim our strong support for HB 4157; This critical legislation addresses the realities of sex trafficking head-on, recognizing the manipulative tactics traffickers use to coerce vulnerable Oregonians into commercial sex and to evade accountability.

While trafficking in popular media often portrays victims locked in rooms or with their hands tied, traffickers commonly use much more subtle forms of manipulation to keep victims under their control. Through grooming, trauma bonding, and threats, traffickers exercise total control over their victims, significantly influencing their ability and willingness to testify against them, especially in person.

Across the country, we have seen traffickers increasingly abuse social media, digital marketplaces, and online communication to prey on and exploit the most marginalized people among us, especially children, and Oregon is no exception.<sup>1</sup> Reports of the online enticement of children—communicating with a child with the intent of committing a sexual offense or abduction—to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's CyberTipline jumped from 292,591 in the first half of 2024 to 518,720 in 2025.<sup>2</sup> Emboldened by the knowledge that under current state law, traffickers can rely on a critical loophole to evade accountability, they bully victims into submission, making them too fearful for their safety and that of loved ones to testify against them. Even as the justice system rightly protects a defendant's right to face their accuser, traffickers are increasingly manipulating that safeguard to evade punishment for egregious crimes.

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<sup>1</sup> BEST Alliance, "Unveiling the Hidden Dangers of Social Media Predators and What Businesses Can do to Help Stop Child Sex Trafficking," *BEST Alliance*, March 7, 2024, <https://www.bestalliance.org/our-latest-news/unveiling-the-hidden-dangers-of-social-media-predators-and-what-businesses-can-do-to-help-stop-child-sex-trafficking>.

<sup>2</sup> This was due in part to the passing of The Report Act which expanded mandatory reporting to include child enticement but NCMEC found this to be indicative of a shift in exploiters behavior, increasingly using the internet to prey on children. See more: Patricia Davis, "Spike in Online Crimes Against Children a 'Wake-Up Call,'" *National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC)* blog, September 4, 2025, <https://www.missingkids.org/blog/2025/spike-in-online-crimes-against-children-a-wake-up-call>.

Survivors of sex and labor trafficking face high rates of PTSD and physical and emotional harms from their experiences of exploitation, in part from the sexual and physical violence, and calculated psychological abuse perpetrated by traffickers.<sup>3</sup> Revisiting these harms by confronting their abusers in court and bearing the burden of proving the violence they have endured, especially for child victims, can be a wholly retraumatizing experience.

Oregon's evidence rules present barriers to survivors' ability to engage in the criminal justice process and allow dangerous criminals to walk free.

HB 4157 extends the same opportunities to trafficking survivors as Oregon's existing Hearsay Exception for victims of domestic violence. The bill provides a carefully limited hearsay exception that:

- Applies *only* in cases of trafficking in persons or the purchase of sex with a minor.
- Allows for the inclusion of statements made *only* within a 24-hour period from when a commercial sex act has taken place.
- Statements can *only* be used when made to trained professionals, stipulating still that a judge must find a "sufficient indication of reliability" before admission.

This narrowly tailored approach maintains due process while using a trauma-informed and modern approach to anti-trafficking rules that better equip the state to keep Oregon's most vulnerable citizens safe from violent predators.

World Without Exploitation's work with trafficking survivors across the country—particularly women and girls who are often deeply fearful of retaliation and face significant evidentiary barriers to holding their abusers accountable—forms the basis of our steadfast support for HB 4157.

We urge you to support this critical survivor-informed common-sense bill that will protect Oregonians from dangerous criminals.

Sincerely,

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<sup>3</sup> Polaris Project, "Love and Trafficking: How Traffickers Groom & Control Their Victims," blog post, February 11, 2021, Polaris Project,

<https://polarisproject.org/blog/2021/02/love-and-trafficking-how-traffickers-groom-control-their-victims/>; Erin Williamson, Nicole M. Dutch, and Heather J. Clawson, *Evidence-Based Mental Health Treatment for Victims of Human Trafficking*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, April 2010, <https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/evidence-based-mental-health-treatment-victims-human-trafficking-0>.

*World Without Exploitation is a fiscally-sponsored project of Tides Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization*