



February 3, 2026

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

RE: SUPPORT for HB 4157 – Hearsay Exception to Protect Trafficking Survivors

Dear Rep. Tran and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I write on behalf of Rights4Girls, a national human rights organization dedicated to defending the rights of vulnerable young women and girls in the U.S., including right here in Oregon, **to express our strong support for HB 4157**. We appreciate the thoughtfulness that went into crafting this legislation and the willingness to address this critical issue disproportionately affecting women and girls in Oregon.

Rights4Girls works to end the policies that punish young women and girls when they survive violence and instead, advocates to provide survivors with access to safety, services, and justice. We do so through policy advocacy, research, coalition building, and training and technical assistance. Through our *National Judicial Institute on Child Sex Trafficking*, we have trained more than 1,000 judges nationwide on how to improve responses to child trafficking survivors in courtrooms and through our *National Multi-Disciplinary Institute on Child Sex Trafficking* we are equipping child welfare, juvenile justice, probation, and law enforcement teams throughout the U.S. on tools to better respond to child victims of sex trafficking instead of relying on mere punishment.

HB 4157 addresses a dangerous legal loophole currently being exploited by human traffickers in Oregon to evade accountability and keep survivors silenced.

The Problem: A Legal Gap Exploited by Traffickers

Human trafficking is a multi-billion-dollar criminal enterprise, and Oregon is not immune from its grip. In recent years, particularly since the pandemic, traffickers have increasingly relied on social media platforms and online marketplaces to recruit and exploit vulnerable youth. These traffickers depend on extreme emotional control, isolation, and trauma bonding to prevent survivors from testifying, allowing perpetrators to avoid prosecution even when strong evidence exists.

While the right to confront one's accuser is a foundational principle of our justice system, traffickers are increasingly weaponizing this right as a tool of coercion. Traffickers routinely intimidate, manipulate, and instill fear in victims, fully aware that under the current law, highly reliable evidence may be excluded if a survivor is too traumatized or frightened to appear in court.

The Impact on Survivors

Survivors of trafficking endure profound and lasting trauma, including sexual violence, physical abuse, psychological coercion, and exploitation. For many survivors, especially children, the courtroom itself can become an extension and re-traumatization of their abuse. The fear of retaliation and being forced to confront their trafficker often prevents victims from participating in prosecutions, resulting in dismissed cases and continued harm to communities.



When traffickers succeed in silencing victims through fear, the justice system inadvertently reinforces their control and allows the most dangerous offenders to remain free.

The Solution: HB 4157

HB 4157 is a measured, survivor-centered reform that modernizes Oregon's evidence rules without compromising due process. The bill mirrors the narrow and well-established hearsay exceptions already used successfully in domestic violence cases and includes clear safeguards, including:

- **Limited scope:** It applies *only* to trafficking in persons and the purchase of sex with a minor.
- **Strict timelines:** It covers statements made within a 24-hour window following a commercial sex act.
- **Strong reliability protections:** Statements must be recorded or made to trained professionals, and a judge must determine that there is a sufficient indication of reliability before admission.

This carefully tailored approach ensures that traffickers cannot benefit from their own intimidation tactics while preserving fairness and judicial oversight.

Call to Action

At Rights4Girls, we work closely with survivors and advocates across the country and consistently see how evidentiary barriers undermine accountability and deny justice to exploited young women and girls. Oregon's current laws are not doing enough to protect survivors, and HB 4157 offers a necessary, commonsense solution.

We urge you to stand with survivors and support HB 4157 by ensuring that traffickers can no longer escape justice by silencing survivors' voices.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to protecting Oregonians. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at yasmin@rights4girls.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Yasmin Z. Vafa, Esq." The signature is fluid and cursive.

Yasmin Z. Vafa, Esq.
Executive Director, Rights4Girls

cc:

Representative Kropf
Representative Chotzen
Representative Wallan
Representative Andersen
Representative Chaichi
Representative Mannix
Representative Lewis