

Submitter: Andrea Metheney
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4157
Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Wallen, Chotzen, and members of the committee,

My name is Andrea Metheney, I am a mom, a daughter, a friend, and I am also a survivor of domestic violence and sex trafficking. I am with Sex Worker Affirming Advocates (SWAA), dedicated to decriminalizing sex work in Oregon. I am giving this testimony in opposition to HB 4157.

While we appreciate the intent to address trafficking concerns, this bill was developed without any meaningful consultation with sex worker-led organizations and carries significant risks for consensual sex workers.

The bill creates a hearsay exception for charges including trafficking in persons, purchasing sex with a minor, promoting prostitution, and compelling prostitution. The inclusion of "Promoting Prostitution" is particularly problematic. This charge criminalizes anyone who assists in prostitution—including drivers, safe contacts, family members, or other sex workers. Unlike compelling prostitution, promoting prostitution doesn't require force, fraud, or coercion. Including it in this hearsay exception will further isolate sex workers and increase their risk by criminalizing their support networks.

During my experience of being trafficked, and throughout the long and difficult journey toward safety and reclaiming my voice, I survived because people showed up for me. Many of those people were consensual sex workers. They recognized the danger I was in because many had lived it themselves, and they knew how to help me see through manipulation, reduce harm, and find a path out of exploitation. From the outside, this kind of support can easily be misunderstood or labeled as "promoting prostitution." In reality, it was about survival. It was about autonomy, safety, and having trusted people on the ground who respected my ability to make my own decisions, while helping me regain control over my life. Policies like this bill risk unintentionally criminalizing or silencing the very people who are most effective at helping individuals escape traffickers.

Speaking here today is not easy, but it is necessary. I am sharing this testimony not as an abstract argument, but as my lived experience. I trust that you came to public service with a commitment to fairness, safety, and justice, and I ask that those values guide you as you consider the real-world impact of this legislation. Thank you for listening, and for carrying these realities with you as you move forward.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Metheney