

Written Testimony in Support of HB 4157

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Hannah Lewis, and I am a community advocate residing along 82nd Ave. I live in an area that experiences a high level of trafficking and related harm. While I do not work directly as a service provider for survivors, I advocate for them in my community and speak out because I believe their experiences deserve to be understood and taken seriously.

I also bring lived experience with my own trauma and abuse. I know firsthand how deeply triggering and retraumatizing it can be to tell and retell painful experiences — especially in settings where you feel scrutinized, disbelieved, or under pressure to be perfectly consistent. Courtrooms, in particular, can be overwhelming and intimidating, even for people who are supported and prepared.

For victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation, these challenges are often magnified. Survivors may disclose their experiences gradually, to different people, and at different times, depending on when they feel safe enough to speak. Early statements made to trusted individuals may be more complete than later testimony shaped by fear, coercion, or the trauma of repeated questioning.

Current evidentiary rules can unintentionally penalize survivors for these realities. When reliable out-of-court statements are excluded simply because a survivor is available to testify, the system places an unfair burden on people who have already endured significant harm. It also increases the risk that survivors are retraumatized in the process of seeking justice.

HB 4157 reflects a more trauma-informed and realistic understanding of how people experience and communicate trauma. It allows courts to consider certain out-of-court statements in serious cases involving sexual exploitation and trafficking, without removing due process or the rights of the accused.

This balance is essential if we want survivors to feel safe coming forward and to have their experiences evaluated fairly.

As a community member and advocate, I strongly support HB 4157. This bill is a step toward a justice system that acknowledges the human impact of trauma and does not require survivors to relive their worst experiences repeatedly just to be heard or for justice to be served.

In closing, I want to acknowledge the fear expressed by sex worker advocates concerned that policies can be misapplied and that marginalized communities often bear the brunt of enforcement. Those concerns deserve to be heard. But the opposition testimony largely asserts broad risks without pointing to evidence that this particular evidentiary change would increase prosecutions of consensual adults or “criminalize support networks” beyond what current law and infrastructure of our city government can support.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Hannah Lewis

Sumner Resident, Portland Oregon

Community Advocate