

Support for HB4157

Hello, Chair, Vice Chairs, and Members of the Committee, and thank you all for the opportunity to speak today in **support** of **House Bill 4157**.

My name is **Esther Garrett**. I am a survivor of sex trafficking, and I am also the founder of a nonprofit organization that serves hundreds of survivors of human trafficking across Oregon each year. I come before you to offer insight grounded not in abstraction, but in consistent patterns I've observed across hundreds of real cases involving investigation, prosecution, and survivor advocacy.

I want to address two points directly.

First, based on my extensive firsthand experience, HB 4157 **strengthens** accountability for traffickers **without** criminalizing peers, friends, or others selling sex. Some have raised concerns that this bill could create ambiguity and expose individuals adjacent to the sex trade to prosecution for promoting prostitution. That concern, while understandable, does not align with how the law is applied in practice. I can say this with full confidence, and based on thousands of cases I've been professionally exposed to over the last 2 decades of my career, that this **isn't** happening.

In every case I have encountered, charges for promoting prostitution require intentional facilitation for benefit in order to apply. These charges are not applied to people who share housing, give rides, or engage in the sex trade themselves. These charges are used to hold traffickers accountable—particularly when evidentiary barriers prevent more severe charges, like Compelling Prostitution, from being brought. HB 4157 does not lower evidentiary standards or expand prosecutorial discretion; it simply clarifies intent through the allowance of hearsay, to include relevant facts., which up until now have been inadmissible.

Second, I want to draw attention to a group whose absence from this room is not symbolic, but central to the need to pass this bill.

People who are trafficked are disproportionately among the most marginalized in our communities. They are more likely to be housing-insecure, undocumented, and people of color. Many cannot participate in public hearings like this, without risking retaliation, incarceration, or deportation. Their absence is not a choice—it is the result of lack of choice or opportunity.

Political debate and hypothesizing are privileges not afforded to individuals who are expending all of their energy simply trying to survive. While those of us in this room have the safety to theorize about the value of this bill, trafficked individuals are living with the very real consequences **of insufficient accountability** every day. I want to use my time today to amplify their voices and the need **pass** laws like HB4157.

Some are in hotel rooms or brothels right now, unable to leave. Some are meeting quotas under threat of violence. They need laws that reflect reality as it exists now—not as it is imagined it could be, in theory.

HB 4157 responds to documented harm with precision. I urge you to **pass** this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.