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Testimony before the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

Senator André Jacque

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Chairman Wanggaard and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify as the author in support of Senate Bill 836, the Human Trafficking Prevention Act.

Human trafficking is a significant concern in Wisconsin, with reports in all 72 counties and corridors crisscrossing our state. Milwaukee has been dubbed the "Sex Trafficking Capital of the Midwest" by law enforcement for several years. Victims of human trafficking, especially women, are often forced into sexual servitude, which may involve prostitution under the guise of an escort service or working in a strip club. Pimps then traffic these individuals by going around the state or across state lines from one establishment to another. Traffickers capitalize on the high demand for these services, the cash nature of the business, and the anonymity of the participants.

This exact problem happened in a Dodge County strip club. Pimps were trafficking girls to a strip club and forcing them to perform sex acts in private rooms. The strip club's owners made these private rooms accessible to pimps knowing they were used for unlawful prostitution activity.

Senate Bill 836 will protect victims of sex trafficking by prohibiting adult-entertainment establishments from being owned or operated by a person who has been convicted of certain human trafficking and sex offenses, or who has been an owner or operator of an adult-entertainment establishment that was declared a public nuisance or that knowingly employed a victim of a human trafficking offense. The bill also prohibits adult-entertainment establishments from having employees under the age of 18, or employees who have been the victim of certain sex or human trafficking offenses.

In addition, the bill prohibits adult-entertainment establishments from knowingly allowing a violation of the Uniform Controlled Substances Act or certain obscenity laws on the premises of the adult-entertainment establishment and requires adult-entertainment establishments to post a human trafficking poster created by the Department of Justice in a prominent location for employees to view. Adult-entertainment establishments would be required to furnish a list of the adult-entertainment establishment's employees, operators, and owners to local law enforcement officials upon request. Adult-entertainment establishments that violate the requirements or prohibitions of the bill would be subject to a forfeiture for each day the adult-entertainment establishment is in violation.

These changes have been suggested by investigators, prosecutors, and victims' support and advocacy groups as a means to address the connection between adult-entertainment establishments and human trafficking. ***This proposal is formally supported by the Badger Sheriffs Association, the Wisconsin Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs Association, and the Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association.***

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 836.