



*Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Regulatory Licensing Reform  
Senator André Jacque  
April 12, 2023*

Chairman Sortwell and Committee Members,

Thank you for holding this public hearing on Assembly Bill 60, aimed at preventing human trafficking. This legislation is identical to 2021 SB 836 as passed by the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee on a 7-0 vote and the full State Senate on a voice vote last session.

Human trafficking is a significant concern in Wisconsin, with reports in all 72 counties and corridors crisscrossing our state. Wisconsin has been considered 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.

Assembly Bill 60 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 has been formally supported by the Badger Sheriffs Association, the Wisconsin Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs Association, Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association, Kids Protection Agency, Wisconsin Catholic Conference and United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS).**

Thank you for your consideration of Assembly Bill 60.

---

# TY BODDEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 59<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

## Testimony on Assembly Bill 60

Assembly Committee on Regulatory Licensing Reform

Wednesday, April 12, 2023

Thank you, Chairman Sortwell, Vice-Chairman Gustafson, and members of the Regulatory Licensing Reform Committee for the opportunity to testify in favor of Assembly Bill 60.

You may be familiar with this legislation as this bill is identical to the 2021 Senate Bill 836 that was passed by the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee by a 7-0 vote. This bill, 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 allowed a human trafficking offense on their premises.

In addition, this bill prohibits adult-entertainment establishments from having employees under the age of 18. Adult-entertainment establishments would also be required to provide a list of the adult-entertainment establishment owners, employees, and operators to local law enforcement officials upon request. Adult-entertainment establishments that violate the requirements or prohibition of this bill will be subject to a forfeiture for each day they're in violation.

Human Trafficking poses a significant threat to our children. It affects inner cities, the counties I represent, which are home to major interstate highways along known trafficking corridors, and to the rest of the state of Wisconsin. A growing demand for prostitution has increased human trafficking right here in our state. These monsters have capitalized on our weak laws to enslave many innocent human beings into a life of forced sexual acts.

I discussed this legislation with a few active anti-human trafficking groups in and around my district and they are excited to see this bill being reintroduced this session. They believe that legislation like this is a great start and is urgently needed.

Passing this bill will help prevent human trafficking by enlisting requirements for adult-entertainment establishments, and providing harsh penalties to those that decide to break the law. We have an opportunity before us to make an everlasting change. While I adamantly support protecting the rights of business owners, we need to equally protect victims and those whose rights have been or will be taken away from them.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration of this bill. I respectfully ask for your support.



## WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: State Representative Shae Sortwell, Chair  
Members, Assembly Committee on Regulatory Licensing Reform

FROM: David Earleywine, Associate Director for Education and Religious Liberty

DATE: April 12, 2023

RE: AB 60, Adult-Entertainment Establishments

---

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC), the public policy voice of the Catholic bishops of Wisconsin, urges you to support Assembly Bill 60, which seeks to protect victims of sex trafficking in adult-entertainment establishments.

Sex trafficking constitutes one of the gravest and most violent human rights abuses. Vulnerable men, women, and children are coerced into performing the most degrading acts—acts that can destroy their sense of self-worth and cause irreparable physical, mental, and emotional harm. A 2014 study on the health consequences of sex trafficking found that survivors reported that because of their brutal treatment, 41 percent had attempted suicide and 54 percent suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.<sup>1</sup> Even after survivors were able to escape trafficking, 96 percent experienced psychological distress, 80 percent experienced depression, and 71 percent experienced shame or guilt. More than two-thirds of survivors contracted one or more sexually-transmitted disease or infection. Most women became pregnant while trafficked and more than half obtained abortions, sometimes against their will. Eighty-four percent used alcohol and drugs while trafficked, either because they were forced by their traffickers or as a means to numb their minds and bodies to the pain they were experiencing.

The Catholic Church, along with other religious and secular institutions, is involved in combating human trafficking both nationally and internationally. In the U.S., the Catholic Coalition Against Human Trafficking, which consists of about twenty Catholic organizations, was one of the groups that helped draft the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 and its subsequent reauthorizations.<sup>2</sup> Catholic women religious have been at the forefront of anti-trafficking work.<sup>3</sup> They and countless other lay

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Health Consequences of Sex Trafficking and Their Implications for Identifying Victims in Healthcare* (2014)

<sup>2</sup> The Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking (CCOHT)  
<https://www.usccb.org/offices/anti-trafficking-program/coalition-catholic-organizations-against-human-trafficking>

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking: <https://sistersagainstrafficking.org>

Catholics reach out directly to persons who are being trafficked to help with housing, transportation, childcare, employment, etc. In Milwaukee, the newly established St. Bakhita House, in partnership with Franciscan Peacemakers Clare Community, provides supportive community housing for women who are seeking to escape sex trafficking. Across Wisconsin, among people of every faith, awareness is growing that sex trafficking is destroying lives and wreaking havoc on families and communities.

Since testifying on the Senate version of the bill, several concerns have been brought to our attention.

In subsection 3(a) regarding employment records, the bill allows a law enforcement officer to present his or her credentials and request a list of employees from the establishment. The establishment is required to comply with that request by the following business day.

This window of time—though perhaps necessary for fulfilling the request—allows traffickers a full day to whisk away a victim and potentially scrub their records before handing them over. Alternatively, a search warrant—backed by probable cause and signed off by a judge—could be executed immediately and perhaps yield better results.

Additionally, subsection 3(a) may encourage law enforcement to abuse their authority in these establishments. Law enforcement officers might be able to use this provision to obtain information for illicit and non-investigative purposes.

For these reasons, the WCC recommends removing or amending subsection 3(a) and instead requiring a search warrant.

The WCC, applauds the sponsors of Assembly Bill 60 for striving to give victims of human trafficking some hope that they will be delivered from their bondage. Should it pass, it will ensure that many others will never become ensnared in this violent and degrading world. We strongly urge the Committee to pass the bill with our recommended amendment.