



PAUL TITTL

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 25TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT
Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice & Public Safety
Assembly Bill 970
1/24/2024

First, thank you Chair Spiros and committee members for hearing AB-970 today. You have heard testimony from other members of the task force today on the crisis of human trafficking.

AB-970 addresses this crisis by adding “Keeping a place of prostitution” to the list of sex offenses, for which a person must register as a sex offender. This change in our law will help protect communities by ensuring the general public is notified about the release of an individual who has kept a place of prostitution.

The most common venues for human trafficking include businesses such as hotels and massage parlors. I find it alarming when a person convicted of keeping a place of prostitution is not required to register with the sex offender registry.

Through conversations with law enforcement, advocacy groups, and constituents of the state, the task force has concluded that a place of prostitution often serves as a hub for human trafficking. By adding this requirement, we can further inform the public on the status of their community.

Thank you again to Chair Spiros and committee members for hearing the bill. I am happy to answer any questions.

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January 24th, 2024

Representative Spiros, Chair

Representative Schutt, Vice-Chair

Members of the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Testimony on 2023 Assembly Bill 970

Relating to: sex offender registration for certain crimes.

Dear Chairman Spiros, Vice-Chair Schutt, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bill 970.

Every county in Wisconsin has experienced human trafficking. According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, since the program's inception in 2007, Wisconsin alone has had 796 human-tracking cases involving 1,640 victims. While those statistics are striking, a 2019 DOJ study found that sex-trafficking data is likely underreported, so the true number of victims is likely much higher.

Unfortunately, the most common venues for sex-trafficking include hotel-based prostitution and residence-based prostitution. Under current law, a person commits the crime of keeping a place of prostitution when the person intentionally keeps a place of prostitution or grants the use or allows the continued use of a place as a place of prostitution. A place of prostitution is defined as any place where a person habitually engages, in public or private, in certain, specified sexual acts for anything of value.

Glaringly though, when a person is convicted of keeping a place of prostitution, they do not need to register with the sex offender registry. This allows criminals to move back into our communities undetected after enabling sex-trafficking and endangering our children.

Assembly Bill 970 would add "keeping a place of prostitution" to the list of sex offenses for which a person must register as a sex offender. This move would help protect our communities by ensuring the general public is notified about the release of a sex-trafficker and help keep our children safe.

Thank you again for hearing this important piece of legislation.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jesse James'.

Senator Jesse James

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Testimony for the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Assembly Bill 970

Relating to: sex offender registration for certain crimes

Wednesday, January 24, 2024

Thank you to the Committee Chair and committee members for allowing us this opportunity to address the background for this bill.

Human trafficking is a global crisis. It affects countless lives, including many individuals right here in Wisconsin. According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, since the program's inception in 2007, Wisconsin has had 796 human-tracking cases involving 1,640 victims. While those statistics are striking, a 2019 DOJ study found that sex-trafficking data is under-reported, so the true number of victims is likely much higher.

As Chair of the Speaker's Task Force on Human Trafficking, I would like to share a few thoughts on this bill. This bill is a product of the hearings held during the past four months where our Human Trafficking Task Force attempted to better understand how trafficking is affecting our society, especially young people. We learned from agency representatives, DOJ, County DA offices, multiple speakers from local law enforcement, and not-for-profit victim support organizations what a challenge it is to turn the tide of human trafficking in Wisconsin.

This exercise gave us a clear pathway to several bills we could introduce that would have an effective influence and help reduce the level of sex and child sex trafficking in Wisconsin. This is one of those bills and the Task Force recommends it for passage.

The Task Force learned that the most common places for sex trafficking often involve hotel-based and residence-based prostitution. Under current law, the offense of keeping a place of prostitution is committed when an individual intentionally maintains or allows the use of a location for prostitution activities. This includes any place where specific sexual acts are consistently conducted in exchange for material or financial gain, whether public or private.

However, under current law, individuals convicted of keeping a place of prostitution are not required to register with the sex offender registry. This loophole enables criminals to reintegrate into our communities without detection, even after being involved in sex trafficking and posing a threat to our children. This poses a significant risk to the children of our communities, especially since 70% of sex trafficking victims begin as minors.

By adding "keeping a place of prostitution" to the list of sex offenses requiring registration as a sex offender, AB 970 enhances community safety by ensuring public notification of a sex trafficker's release.

I thank Rep. Tittle and Sen. James for authoring this bill and testifying on its behalf.



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: Members, Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Members, Committee on Workforce Development & Economic Opportunities
Members, Committee on Jobs, Economy, and Small Business

FROM: David Earleywine, Associate Director

DATE: January 24, 2024

RE: Support for AB-970, AB-971, AB972, AB-973, AB-974, AB-976, AB-978,
AB-979, AB-980, AB-981, Human Trafficking

On behalf of the Wisconsin Catholic Conference, the public policy voice of the bishops of Wisconsin, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the following bills being heard in this and other Assembly committees today:

AB-970, Sex Offender Registration for Certain Crimes
AB-971, Human Trafficking of Adults at Risk for the Purpose of Commercial Sex Acts
AB-972, Solicitation for Prostitution and Providing a Penalty
AB-973, Mandatory Training Regarding Human Trafficking
AB-974, Civil Cause of Action for Human Trafficking and Trafficking a Child
AB-976, Testimony of a Child in a Criminal Proceeding for a Human Trafficking Crime
AB-978, Creation of a Human Trafficking Council
AB-979, Human Trafficking Victim Services Grant Program
AB-980, Displaying a Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline Poster
AB-981, Instruction on Human Trafficking in Certain Specialty Schools (Barbering)

Human trafficking constitutes one of the gravest offenses against basic human rights and dignity. It preys upon the most vulnerable men, women, and children, who are frequently coerced into performing the most degrading forms of human labor. It denies everything that a civilized society stands for and that Catholic social teaching espouses: the protection of human dignity and human rights; the preferential option for the poor; the call to family and community; the rights of workers; and solidarity.

As of 2022, it is estimated that over 27 million people are victims of human trafficking.¹ This can take the form of sexual exploitation, forced marriage, coerced and forced labor, child soldiers, and more. That number includes more than 3.3 million children. In

¹ International Labour Organization, *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery*, (September 2022)
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_854733.pdf



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

Wisconsin specifically, the National Human Trafficking Hotline reports nearly 800 cases involving over 1,600 victims with the vast majority suffering from sex trafficking.²

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.³ Catholic women religious have been at the forefront of anti-trafficking work.⁴ They and countless other lay 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.

The WCC, therefore, applauds the Speaker and those involved with the bipartisan task force for bringing forward these bills. These bills strive to give victims of human trafficking some hope that they will be delivered from their bondage and help prevent others from being ensnared in this violent and degrading world. We strongly urge the Legislature to pass these bills.

² Spectrum News 1, *How big of a problem is sex trafficking in Wisconsin?* (April 24, 2023) <https://spectrumnews1.com/wi/milwaukee/news/2023/04/19/part-1--how-big-of-a-problem-is-sex-trafficking-in-wisconsin->

³ The Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking (CCOAH) <https://www.usccb.org/offices/anti-trafficking-program/coalition-catholic-organizations-against-human-trafficking>

⁴ U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking: <https://sistersagainstrafficking.org>