



February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024

Senator Wanggaard, Chair  
Senator Jacque, Vice-Chair  
Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

**Testimony on 2023 Senate Bill 945**

*Relating to: sex offender registration for certain crimes.*

Dear Chairman Wanggaard, Vice-Chair Jacque, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 945.

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.

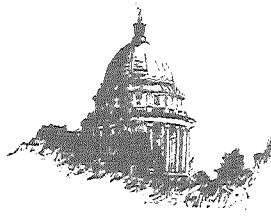
Senate Bill 945 would add "keeping a place of prostitution" to the list of sex offenses for which a person must register as a sex offender. This move would help protect our communities by ensuring the general public is notified about the release of a sex-trafficker and help keep our children safe.

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  
23rd Senate District  
Sen.James@legis.wisconsin.gov



---

# PAUL TITTL

---

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 25<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

Senate Bill 945

2/21/2024

First, thank you Chair Wanggaard and committee members for hearing SB-945 today. You have heard testimony from other members of the task force today on the crisis of human trafficking.

SB-945 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, Chair Wanggaard and committee members, for hearing the bill. I am happy to answer any questions.

---

**Capitol Office:** Post Office Box 8953 • Madison, WI 53708-8953

(608) 266-0315 • Toll-Free: (888) 529-0025 • Fax: (608) 282-3625 • **Email:** Rep.Tittl@legis.wi.gov



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: Senator Van Wanggaard, Chair  
Members, Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

FROM: David Earleywine, Associate Director

DATE: February 21, 2024

RE: Support for SB 940, SB 942, SB 945, SB 946, SB 949, SB 954, SB 960, SB 961,  
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 committee today:

SB 940, Mandatory Training Regarding Human Trafficking  
SB 942, Human Trafficking of Adults at Risk for the Purpose of Commercial Sex Acts  
SB 945, Sex Offender Registration for Certain Crimes  
SB 946, Testimony of a Child in a Criminal Proceeding for a Human Trafficking Crime  
SB 949, Courtroom Supports and Sealing Identity of Child Victims and Witnesses  
SB 954, Creation of a Human Trafficking Council  
SB 960, Instruction on Human Trafficking in Certain Specialty Schools (Barbering)  
SB 961, Human Trafficking Victim Services Grant Program

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

---

<sup>1</sup> 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](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_854733.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> 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->

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>3</sup> Catholic women religious have been at the forefront of anti-trafficking work.<sup>4</sup> 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 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.

---

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

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



# WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 • MADISON, WI 53708

## **Testimony for the Assembly Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety**

### **Senate Bill 945**

**Relating to: sex offender registration for certain crimes**

**Wednesday, February 21, 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.

Rep. Jerry O'Connor  
(608) 267-9152

Rep.O'Connor@legis.wisconsin.gov

By adding “keeping a place of prostitution” to the list of sex offenses requiring registration as a sex offender, SB 945 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.

Rep. Jerry O’Connor  
(608) 267-9152  
Rep.O’Connor@legis.wisconsin.gov