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Testimony before the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

Senator André Jacque

Senate Bill 91

March 13, 2025

Chairman Wanggaard and Colleagues:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify as the author of Senate Bill 91, which would impose the penalty of life imprisonment for the devastating crime of child trafficking when three or more children have been sold into this brutal form of modern slavery. This bill also ensures that those convicted of trafficking children will **not** be eligible for release to extended supervision. SB 91 is the Senate companion to AB 86, which passed the Assembly Judiciary Committee with unanimous bipartisan support and will be taken up by the full Assembly on the floor later today. This legislation is similar to Arizona Proposition 313 which was enacted with 65% of the vote statewide after passing Arizona's State Senate with substantial bipartisan support to require that anyone convicted of child sex trafficking be sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole or release.

Child trafficking is a horrific crime that steals the innocence and future of our most vulnerable — our children. It is a crime that destroys lives, leaving long-lasting scars on its victims, often for the rest of their lives. In Wisconsin and across the nation, child trafficking is a hidden epidemic, and the problem continues to grow. Sex trafficking and sexual exploitation of minors are among the worst forms of child abuse, and according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, one in 10 youth will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday. Other studies show that over 70 percent of sex trafficking begins while the victim is a minor, and as several Internet Crimes Against Children investigators have relayed to me, pimps seek out victims to exploit when they are most vulnerable. These children are often manipulated, threatened, or coerced into situations beyond their control. Many of these victims are never rescued or are left to endure unimaginable suffering for far too long.

The trafficking of children is a devastating violation of human dignity, and the victims of trafficking deserve justice. They deserve to know that the individuals who harmed them will not be allowed to return to society, potentially to harm others.

I urge your support to stand with the children who have no voice in this fight, and to ensure that those who engage in the trafficking of children will face justice in the most powerful way possible. Let's send a message to these creeps: If you come to Wisconsin to victimize our children, you will spend the rest of your life in prison. This bill is an important part of a comprehensive strategy to deter child sex trafficking in Wisconsin. Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 91.



SHAE SORTWELL

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Hearing Testimony
Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
March 13, 2025
Senate Bill 91

Chairman Wanggaard and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety – Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify on SB 91, a bill that seeks justice for child trafficking victims.

Human trafficking is one of the world's greatest atrocities, with lifetime repercussions to victims and ripple effects upon societies. In this modern slavery, victims are forced into various forms of exploitation, including labor, criminal activity, and sexual favors.

Wisconsin law should reflect the justice these victims deserve. Our law has not gone far enough to lock up the monsters that harm trafficked children. Senate Bill 91 increases the penalty for child traffickers, where three or more children are victimized, from a Class C felony to a Class A, which carries a penalty of life imprisonment.

This legislation received a unanimous vote from the Assembly Judiciary Committee. We hope for the same in this committee.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify on this legislation and would gladly answer any questions the committee may have.