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Penalties for pimps increase under human trafficking bill



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by Marc Kovac | Capital Bureau Chief

Columbus -- Pimps would face increased criminal penalties and would have to register as sex offenders, under legislation OK'd by the Ohio House May 22.

House Bill 262 also would require certain businesses to display posters designed to help victims of human trafficking, and minors trapped in "modern day slavery" would have greater access to public services.

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"We have a major crime wave facing us, and it is hiding right before our eyes and in your communities," said Rep. Teresa Fedor, D-Toledo and primary sponsor of the bill. "... Every day, Ohio's most vulnerable citizens are coerced, kidnapped and exploited. Human trafficking, modern day slavery, is the human rights issue of our lifetime."

HB 262 passed on a vote of 94-0 and heads to the Ohio Senate for further consideration.

The bill is the latest attempt by state officials to deal with human trafficking, a crime in which victims are forced to work or have sex, with payments benefiting their captors.

In recent years, lawmakers increased criminal penalties against perpetrators, and Gov. John Kasich recently created a new task force to offer additional recommendations to combat the crime.

Among other provisions, the bill approved by the House May 22 would increase felony charges against pimps, with potential mandatory prison terms and sex offender registration requirements.

Additionally, state officials also would have to create a poster spotlighting a national hotline available for trafficking victim, to be posted in highway rest areas, truck stops, hospitals, hotels, adult entertainment establishments, bars and liquor stores and other locations.

Officers would be required to participate in additional training on identifying and handling human trafficking cases. And trafficking victims could seek civil damages from their captors.

"Until now, our laws have been woefully inadequate to combat the exploitation of these vulnerable populations," said Rep. Danny Bulp, R-West Union, and chairman of the committee that considered the bill. "... The problem is very real, and it is time that we start to take action to protect Ohio's citizens from this exploitation."

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1. Posted by normajeana less than a minute ago

The majority of sex workers are NOT victims of human trafficking- in fact, the number of human trafficking victims of ALL types of labor is FAR FAR fewer than the pandering politicians would lead people to believe. Increasing penalties for "pimps" when those "pimps" do NOT force anyone into prostitution is like penalizing employers who give employees safe working conditions and find customers for their services. The best way to protect people in sex work is to decriminalize all consenting adult commercial sex so that we can go to the police and report abuses against us. This whole hysteria about 'human trafficking' is recycling the same hysteria of a century ago when we were warned about the 'white slave trade' which led to the passage of the Mann Act. There are more victims of domestic violence and spousal abuse than there are victims of human trafficking- why not start a crusade to ban marriage to protect women and children from abusive husbands and fathers?

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