

The Honorable Carolyn Tomei
Human Services Committee

Madam Chairwoman Tomei and Members of the Human Services Committee:

Thank you for your hard work surrounding HB3623. The Oregon Center for Christian Values (OCCV) unites Christians to seek God's justice in Oregon. We base our personal and public values on the life of Jesus Christ as taught to us in the Bible and advocate for policies which reflect Christ's care for the poor, the oppressed and the most vulnerable.

As an Oregon resident and member of the OCCV Human Trafficking Advisory Committee, I have been following the development of HB 3623. Fighting the global epidemic of human trafficking has been a passion for many years. In June 2007, I moved from Oregon to South Asia to work for a human rights organization, International Justice Mission (IJM) where we worked to rescue and rehabilitate trafficked victims of forced labor. Whether by force or coercion, I witnessed "owners" subject their laborers to various forms of verbal, physical and sexual abuse. These abusive and traumatic events create complex barriers in working to rehabilitate the laborers. Without identification, rescue and individualized case planning, self-sufficiency is impossible. Upon my return to Oregon, I found that after my experience in South Asia, I could not keep silent of what I saw not just in South Asia but in Oregon as well.

Prior to working with IJM, I worked as caseworker for the Oregon Department of Human Services Child Welfare and upon my return to Oregon, I returned to DHS Child Welfare where I work as an Intake Screener at the Metropolitan Child Abuse Hotline. At DHS, I heard stories and worked with young girls and women ravaged by the effects of sexual abuse, sexual violence and sexual exploitation.

In my time with DHS and IJM, I become very familiar with the international, criminal, socio-economic, relational and macro system dynamics which are the cause of human trafficking and as a employee of the Child Abuse Hotline, I know how critical it is to educate the community regarding what and how they can advocate for the needs of Oregon's children. If the community does not know where to turn or who to call for assistance, the safety of children is at risk.

In supporting HB3623, an opportunity for rescue is offered by means of a hotline number, a hotline number that can connect victims to resources and law enforcement in an effort to escape from their abuser. The Polaris Project is a Washington, DC-based anti-trafficking organization that works exclusively on domestic trafficking, especially sex trafficking of minors, including both American-born and foreign victims. Among its many ideas of ways to be involved, Polaris encourages businesses and individuals to prominently post its Sex Trafficking Hotline poster as widely as possible. HB 3623 would provide their hotline number, free of charge, to OLCC licensed businesses with an encouragement to post their number in a visible location. I believe it will be worth it if only one 13-year old girl who is sexually exploited and serially raped is rescued.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 3623.

Sincerely,

Stacy Bellavia