By:  Jetton, et al. (Senate Sponsor - Bettencourt) H.B. No. 279

(In the Senate - Received from the House April 17, 2023; April 18, 2023, read first time and referred to Committee on Criminal Justice; May 3, 2023, reported favorably by the following vote: Yeas 5, Nays 0; May 3, 2023, sent to printer.)

COMMITTEE VOTE

               Yea Nay Absent  PNV

Whitmire        X

Flores          X

Bettencourt     X

Hinojosa        X

Huffman         X

King                     X

Miles                     X

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the prosecution and punishment of the offense of trafficking of persons.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1.  Section 20A.01, Penal Code, is amended by adding Subdivision (1-b) to read as follows:

(1-b) "Disabled individual" has the meaning assigned by

Section 22.021(b).

SECTION 2.  Sections 20A.02(a) and (b), Penal Code, are amended to read as follows:

(a)  A person commits an offense if the person knowingly:

(1)  traffics another person with the intent that the trafficked person engage in forced labor or services;

(2)  receives a benefit from participating in a venture that involves an activity described by Subdivision (1), including by receiving labor or services the person knows are forced labor or services;

(3)  traffics another person and, through force, fraud, or coercion, causes the trafficked person to engage in conduct prohibited by:

(A)  Section 43.02 (Prostitution);

(B)  Section 43.03 (Promotion of Prostitution);

(B-1)  Section 43.031 (Online Promotion of Prostitution);

(C)  Section 43.04 (Aggravated Promotion of Prostitution);

(C-1)  Section 43.041 (Aggravated Online Promotion of Prostitution); or

(D)  Section 43.05 (Compelling Prostitution);

(4)  receives a benefit from participating in a venture that involves an activity described by Subdivision (3) or engages in sexual conduct with a person trafficked in the manner described in Subdivision (3);

(5)  traffics a child with the intent that the trafficked child engage in forced labor or services;

(6)  receives a benefit from participating in a venture that involves an activity described by Subdivision (5), including by receiving labor or services the person knows are forced labor or services;

(7)  traffics a child or disabled individual and by any means causes the trafficked child or disabled individual to engage in, or become the victim of, conduct prohibited by:

(A)  Section 21.02 (Continuous Sexual Abuse of Young Child or Disabled Individual);

(B)  Section 21.11 (Indecency with a Child);

(C)  Section 22.011 (Sexual Assault);

(D)  Section 22.021 (Aggravated Sexual Assault);

(E)  Section 43.02 (Prostitution);

(E-1)  Section 43.021 (Solicitation of Prostitution);

(F)  Section 43.03 (Promotion of Prostitution);

(F-1)  Section 43.031 (Online Promotion of Prostitution);

(G)  Section 43.04 (Aggravated Promotion of Prostitution);

(G-1)  Section 43.041 (Aggravated Online Promotion of Prostitution);

(H)  Section 43.05 (Compelling Prostitution);

(I)  Section 43.25 (Sexual Performance by a Child);

(J)  Section 43.251 (Employment Harmful to Children); or

(K)  Section 43.26 (Possession or Promotion of Child Pornography); or

(8)  receives a benefit from participating in a venture that involves an activity described by Subdivision (7) or engages in sexual conduct with a child or disabled individual trafficked in the manner described in Subdivision (7).

(b)  Except as otherwise provided by this subsection and Subsection (b-1), an offense under this section is a felony of the second degree.  An offense under this section is a felony of the first degree if:

(1)  the applicable conduct constitutes an offense under Subsection (a)(5), (6), (7), or (8), regardless of whether the actor knows the age of the child or whether the actor knows the victim is disabled at the time of the offense;

(2)  the commission of the offense results in the death of the person who is trafficked;

(3)  the commission of the offense results in the death of an unborn child of the person who is trafficked; or

(4)  the actor recruited, enticed, or obtained the victim of the offense from a shelter or facility operating as a residential treatment center that serves runaway youth, foster children, the homeless, or persons subjected to human trafficking, domestic violence, or sexual assault.

SECTION 3.  Section 16.0045(a), Civil Practice and Remedies Code, is amended to read as follows:

(a)  A person must bring suit for personal injury not later than 30 years after the day the cause of action accrues if the injury arises as a result of conduct that violates:

(1)  Section 22.011(a)(2), Penal Code (sexual assault of a child);

(2)  Section 22.021(a)(1)(B), Penal Code (aggravated sexual assault of a child);

(3)  Section 21.02, Penal Code (continuous sexual abuse of young child or disabled individual);

(4)  Section 20A.02(a)(7)(A), (B), (C), (D), or (H) or Section 20A.02(a)(8), Penal Code, involving an activity described by Section 20A.02(a)(7)(A), (B), (C), (D), or (H) or sexual conduct with a child or disabled individual trafficked in the manner described by Section 20A.02(a)(7), Penal Code (certain sexual trafficking [~~of a child~~]);

(5)  Section 43.05(a)(2), Penal Code (compelling prostitution by a child); or

(6)  Section 21.11, Penal Code (indecency with a child).

SECTION 4.  Section 2(a), Article 38.37, Code of Criminal Procedure, is amended to read as follows:

(a)  Subsection (b) applies only to the trial of a defendant for:

(1)  an offense under any of the following provisions of the Penal Code:

(A)  Section 20A.02, if punishable as a felony of the first degree under Section 20A.02(b)(1) (Sex Trafficking of a Child or Disabled Individual);

(B)  Section 21.02 (Continuous Sexual Abuse of Young Child or Disabled Individual);

(C)  Section 21.11 (Indecency With a Child);

(D)  Section 22.011(a)(2) (Sexual Assault of a Child);

(E)  Sections 22.021(a)(1)(B) and (2) (Aggravated Sexual Assault of a Child);

(F)  Section 33.021 (Online Solicitation of a Minor);

(G)  Section 43.25 (Sexual Performance by a Child); or

(H)  Section 43.26 (Possession or Promotion of Child Pornography), Penal Code; or

(2)  an attempt or conspiracy to commit an offense described by Subdivision (1).

SECTION 5.  Section 772.0062(a)(1), Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

(1)  "Child sex trafficking" means conduct constituting an offense [~~prohibited~~] under Section 20A.02(a)(7) or (8), Penal Code, that is committed against a child.

SECTION 6.  The change in law made by this Act applies only to an offense committed on or after the effective date of this Act. An offense committed before the effective date of this Act is governed by the law in effect on the date the offense was committed, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose. For purposes of this section, an offense was committed before the effective date of this Act if any element of the offense occurred before that date.

SECTION 7.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2023.

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