

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence  
For HB 3554

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Hearing Date: April 11, 2023 10:30 AM - or upon final adjourn./recess or bill referral if permission granted

Wendi Turner, Dr.  
Hope Over Hurt  
Sugarland, TX

To Chairman Moody and All Committee Members:

My name is Wendi J. Turner and I am a Servant Leader, and Executive Director of the non for profit- Hope Over Hurt. I stand in solidarity with NTZ members and Jacquelyn Aluotto for the tireless work in the arena of human trafficking.

It is with great brevity that I ask for your assistance with this bill. In times like this, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez stated, "There is so much fear and hate. We must negate it with active, courageous love," and I am in full support of changing the act of evil and hate while changing the narrative filled with hope, and active, courageous love.

As a 5th generation educator, I worked in Title I schools for 10 years. We are coined with the term "At-Risk" youth. I can attest to witness I have had a multitude of instances where a child's life was at risk due to poverty, familial impact, and sadly sexual and domestic abuse. Is a child truly safe without laws in place that exemplify true advocacy? It is imperative that we create truly safe spaces for youth of all ages and demographics by which all have equity regarding academics, social development, and basic needs met. We can all agree that safety is vital for all developmental environments of any age. Include other variables such as drug use, unstable home environments, domestic violence; you have a recipe for youth in RTC's and foster care systems.

This bill is purposed to protect children who are in foster care and residential treatment centers. Clearly, children who are in these centers are already facing very difficult circumstances. But unfortunately, too many kids are being sold for sex while they are in the custody of the State of Texas. This often involves owners and workers in treatment centers, youth in centers who are paid by adult traffickers to groom other kids and the traffickers themselves. It is sad and hurtful that I often weighed the severity of a child's environment because our foster care centers were even more dangerous than their current environment. There were many days I left the school in tears and without resting through the night because I was concerned about the protection of my students. It should not be this way! It is too easy for predators to make profit while losing humanity in the process.

To change the narrative of society, we must do more to eradicate this dark emergent practice by making it publicly known (as law) that there will be severe consequences to such actions.

As I close, I am reminded of the words from Alexander Hamilton, "Those who stand for nothing, fall for anything."  
I stand for Justice with HB 3554

Wendi J. Turner

James Dixon, Senior Pastor/Board Member

No Trafficking Zone, Inc. - NTZ

Houston, TX

My name is Bishop James Dixon, II, senior pastor of The Community Of Faith Church, in Houston and board member of NTZ "No Trafficking Zone", Inc.

"The true measure of the soul of our society is seen in how we treat our children." This statement by Nelson Mandela challenges us today. In the seats each of you hold, is the opportunity to demonstrate the moral consciousness and commitment to protect children and college students from the evil scourge of human trafficking.

I am urging your support for HB 3553. This bill is purposed to protect college campuses and college students from the efforts of traffickers who are skilled at luring students into grooming processes. College students are vulnerable for many reasons. 1) They are often financially challenged. 2) They are away from home and traditional support systems. 3) Students who have aged out of foster care have no family to go home to during holidays, have no parents to support them. Traffickers take advantage of these vulnerabilities. By passing HB into law, students will know you cared and you did the right thing to protect them. By increasing the felony and sentencing guidelines traffickers will know the consequences are too severe for the crime. Their parents and voters will know that this committee did the best thing for their students by making their campuses a No Trafficking Zone.

I also urge your support for HB 3554. This bill is purposed to protect children who are in foster care and residential treatment centers. Clearly, children who are in these centers are already facing very difficult circumstances. But unfortunately, too many kids are being sold for sex while they are in the custody of the State of Texas. This often involves owners and workers in treatment centers, youth in centers who are paid by adult traffickers to groom other kids and the traffickers themselves. The use of electronic devises are always involved. By passing HB 3553 into law, this committee will demonstrate a "Zero Tolerance" attitude for any adult who dares to violate our children. Increasing the time such criminals spend in prison will serve as a warning. Don't Mess with Children in Texas!

Thank you for serving and thank you for making trafficking children and college students in Texas a crime that results in being arrested, prosecuted and the harshest sentencing possible. God will bless you for your work of love.

Dierdra Rideaux, Co-Servant Leader & VP

Hope Over Hurt

Houston, TX

To Chairman Moody and all Committee Members:

My name is Dierdra Rideaux, a co-servant community leader and vice president. I'm honored to support the work led by NTZ member and President, Jacquelyn Aluotto.

I ask your support for HB 3554. This amended bill is purposed to protect children who are in foster care and residential treatment centers and much more. As a former educator I've worked with many youth who've been placed in these centers for years and they've come out more scarred than before they went into them. Because too many of these kids are being sold for sex while they are in the custody of the State of Texas. This often involves owners and workers in treatment centers, youth in centers who are paid by adult traffickers to groom other kids and the traffickers themselves. By passing HB 3554 into law, this committee will demonstrate a "Zero Tolerance" attitude for any adult who dares to violate our children. And by Increasing the time such criminals spend in prison will serve as a warning. The children of the State of Texas deserve to be protected and thank you for your commitment to provide it through the passing of HB 3554.