



Chairman Siegfried and members of the House Federal & State Affairs Committee:

As State Director of Concerned Women for America of Kansas, I am pleased to be able to testify in favor of HB 2054 the Community Defense Act. As a woman, I am appalled at recent stories featuring sex trafficking and its link to pornography, adult "entertainment" and adult businesses. The tentacles of pornography and its insatiable appetite for young girls and women to supply the demand fueled by lust is horrifying to most Americans. Most of those trafficked are children and women; this is a problem that needs to be addressed.

One of the venues for these young girls and women are sexually-oriented businesses that portray women as objects. Many of these women are coerced and forced into performing or submitting to acts that most of us prefer not to discuss. In Detroit in 2010, the manager of a strip club was charged after authorities learned a 14-year-old girl was employed as a topless dancer several nights a week. The prosecutor of the case stated, "Our youth are not some cheap commodity, to be used and cast aside." [Huffington Post, 4/23/10] In Houston a federal judge sentenced three men to eight years in prison after they pleaded guilty in a sex trafficking case where prosecutors said adults and juveniles as young as 16 worked as prostitutes at sexually-oriented businesses in Houston.

Lest we think that this problem is only associated with large cities, several articles by the *Wichita Eagle* pointed out the fact that Wichita is a key location for trafficking victims because of the confluence of Interstate highways. Police have documented known pimps recruiting girls as young as 12 from Wichita and selling them for sex across the nation. These girls according to the article ("Wichita a Key Spot for Rescuing Kids in Sex Trade", Ron Sylvester, September 2011) are found at amateur nights in Wichita strip clubs, on streets and at schools and through Facebook pages. The FBI considers Wichita one of the top cities of origination for sex trafficking.

Pimps from other states frequent amateur nights at Wichita strip clubs looking for recruits; they buy the girls jewelry and new clothes and give them money to lure them. Once they have been sold for sex or "turned out" as dancers they are intimidated, shamed and often drugged to keep them compliant. Youth in the sex trade are on average between 12 and 14-years-old. Pimps often offer the girls fake identification to avoid trafficking charges. According to Karen Countryman-Roswurm, a social worker in Wichita who interviewed girls who have worked in strip bars in the Wichita area, the girls told her:

- There is always more going on than dancing in the strip clubs and bars.
- An Internet site Backpage.com is considered the main source of advertising for traffickers. In the ads according to the *Wichita Eagle* story ("Men Charged with Rape, Human Trafficking," Ron Sylvester, March 13, 2011), the girls often lie about their age as instructed, but their real pictures are portrayed.

According to another article in the *Wichita Eagle* ("Police Officials Voice Concern over Spike in Local Sex Trafficking Cases," Stan Finger, Sept. 21, 2011), sex trafficking cases in Wichita have more than tripled over the past four years, jumping from nine in 2008 to 28 as of September 2011.

Another problem in monitoring where these children go after being trafficked is a lack of complete data and reporting due to problems with identifying these girls as being forced or coerced into sexual activities. Often the girls are runaways or have problems at home, so the pimp represents a safe haven to them; as a result, they are reluctant or too frightened to confide in social workers or police officers.

We urge you to pass this common-sense bill out of committee. After all, one of these girls could be your daughter, niece, neighbor or acquaintance. Regulating these businesses will make the community a better place, and it will be a safer world for our children.

Judy Smith, State Director
Concerned Women for America of Kansas