

Talking Points:  
Representative Gary Howell  
HB's 5542-HB 5544

Thank you Chairman Heise for taking testimony today on this very important legislation, House Bills 5542, 5543, and 5544.

This package of bills together would expand the ability of victims of human trafficking to apply to have their convictions of local prostitution related ordinances set aside and creates a presumption that any violation of a local prostitution ordinance by a person under 18 years of age, was the result of the coercion or the result of the person being a victim of human trafficking.

The Human Trafficking commission in 2013 found that victims of human trafficking are often misidentified as criminals, arrested, prosecuted and convicted of prostitution and other related crimes.

Once they have been convicted, these crimes, especially prostitution related crimes, carry with them a stigma that can present considerable barriers to the victim throughout their lives.

Often these crimes must be reported on criminal histories when they are applying for employment, trying to obtain a student loan or applying for housing.

These bills attempt to help victims of human trafficking by taking away at least some barriers to their reintegration into society.

My bill, House Bill 5543, amends the Michigan Probate Code to allow a person who was adjudicated as a juvenile for a local prostitution related offense to apply to have a judge set aside the conviction where the judge finds by a preponderance of the evidence that the offense was a result of human trafficking.

Victims of trafficking should not be viewed as criminals, by the law or society, and this bill helps ensure that.

I would be happy to entertain any questions, or if the Chair prefers, I will now defer to Representative Cox and Representative Jenkins so that they may discuss their respective bills.