

DATE: March 15, 2012

ATTN: COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Rep. John M. Mizuno, Chair
Rep. Jo Jordan, Vice Chair
Rep. Della Au Belatti
Rep. Jessica Wooley
Rep. Faye P. Hanohano
Rep. Ryan I. Yamane
Rep. Chris Lee
Rep. Corinne W.L. Ching
Rep. Dee Morikawa
Rep. Kymberly Marcos Pine

LATE TESTIMONY

DATE: Thursday, March 15, 2012

TIME: 10:30am

PLACE: Conference Room 329, State Capitol, 415 South Beretania Street

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB2576 SD1 - RELATING TO PROSTITUTION

Dear Committee on Human Services:

I am a parent, retired military member and citizen with a strong belief that second chances are often the best chances. Sometimes a second chance is truly another person's first real chance when they are victims of sex-trafficking. This committee is in a position to give victims a second chance, a true new lease on a life that was once held by a nefarious other.

This bill allows survivors who have been intimidated, forced, or defrauded into prostitution to file motions to petition the court to vacate convictions of prostitution offenses suffered while under the control of their trafficking pimps. Help give these victims a second chance and pass this bill.

Once rehabilitated, victims of sex-trafficking have significant hurdles to overcome when they reenter the work force or return to school. Shame, discrimination, harassment are just a few of the difficulties facing those who just need an opportunity to recover from a very dark past. Instead they currently must expose the worst, most degrading time in their lives each time they go for a job. How many of these rehabilitated victims will be able to use the tools taught through state and charitable groups when they cannot even get the job at which they could succeed? The victimization continues for these survivors in a way uncommon to other survivors. They are criminals "on paper" while they are revictimized in reality.

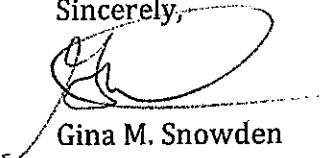
As a retired Airman, I've known military members with criminal records who started their military careers as a second chance to change their lives. Many were later deemed heroes. Many have guided others to success on *their* second chance. All served their country. Why shouldn't sex-trafficking victims who have been arrested for prostitution have the same opportunity? What if sex-trafficking victims wanted to serve in the military where they could continue to grow in an environment of loyalty, camaraderie, and fairness? Due to the nature of an offense such as

prostitution, they would more than likely not be allowed to enlist or obtain a security clearance. What kind of job can these victims expect with such a record that was not of their own doing, but the doing of a pimp/trafficker? Are they doomed to work entry-level jobs and forego schooling because, "What's the point?" Are they doomed as victims to stay at a social/financial level only slightly above that from which they were rescued? This committee can help change that.

I believe, like our own children to whom we implore to do well in school and stay out of trouble so they can have a good future, we act of these victim's behalf. Let's give them another chance to make a good future for themselves. You can help ensure they have an opportunity to get on a path that leads far away from a life not of their choosing toward a good life of vast potential, filled with hope.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony.

Sincerely,



Gina M. Snowden

Testimony for SB2576 on 3/22/2012 2:45:00 PM

mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov [mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov]

Sent: Thursday, March 22, 2012 2:08 PM

To: JUDtestimony

Cc: vl@traffickjamming.org

Testimony for JUD 3/22/2012 2:45:00 PM SB2576

Conference room: 325
Testifier position: Support
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: V L
Organization: Individual
E-mail: vl@traffickjamming.org
Submitted on: 3/22/2012

Comments:

SB2576 SD1 HD1 - In Support

Vacating convictions of victims who have helped in the prosecution of their pimps is essential to helping these victims move on with their lives. As a mentor to many young women & girls who have come out of forced prostitution situations I can tell you that one of their biggest fears is filling out a job application and an potential employer finding out on a background check that they were once involved in prostitution. Not only does it bring up the past and all the shame & guilt that they internally struggle with daily, it also creates a very real potential of them facing sexual harassment in the workplace. It is not simply having to explain the force, coercion, and violence that they went through. It's not even the reliving of the worst days of their lives that scares them the most. It is the fear that the employer, the boss, the manager, the other employees will not only learn of the victims involvement in prostitution but that these individuals will take advantage of a vulnerable situation and harass the victim even more. Our victims have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. They have been cornered. They have been threatened and abused even in the workplace. These are not unwarranted fears.

If the victim helps put away the pimps by working with law enforcement and the judicial system to relive the worst days of their lives, to recount the abuse, threats, coercion, fears, violence, etc...proving that the pimp was controlling them. Why should they have to relive these moments every time they fill out a job or loan application for the rest of their lives? How can we expect them to move forward with college & careers when at every step they have to yet face another fight with the past? Why should they continue to be punished when they have helped prove that the pimp was in control & the pimp profited from their exploitation? There is no logical reason that a victim of a crime should also carry the punishment of the crime.