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IN REPLY, REFER TO:
OCS 23.1030

January 27, 2023

To: The Honorable John M. Mizuno, Chair,
The Honorable Terez Amato, Vice Chair, and
Members of the House Committee on Human Services

Date: Tuesday, January 31, 2023

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Place: Conference Room 329, State Capitol & Videoconference

From: 
Jovanie Domingo Dela Cruz, Executive Director
DLIR – Office of Community Services

Position: Support

Re: H.B. 552 RELATING TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING

I. OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION

This bill would transfer, rename, and broaden the potential services that a human trafficking special fund would provide.

II. CURRENT LAW

The Office of Community Services has had a special fund for serving human trafficking victims. However, the sum that was collected was never sufficient to administer services for trafficking victims.

III. COMMENTS ON THE HOUSE BILL

This bill would transfer the OCS special fund to the Department of Human Services where any funds could be consolidated with funds from other sources, in order to provide for reparations to trafficking victims. OCS supports the intent of the measure and thanks the committee for the opportunity to testify.



HB 552, RELATING TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING

JANUARY 31, 2023 · HOUSE HUMAN SERVICES
COMMITTEE · CHAIR REP. JOHN MIZUNO

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: Imua Alliance **supports** HB 552, relating to human trafficking, which converts the human trafficking victim services fund to a human trafficking reparations fund and revises the purposes for the monies in the fund to provide direct financial assistance to victims of trafficking.

Imua Alliance is one of the state's largest victim service providers for survivors of sex trafficking. Over the past 10 years, we have provided comprehensive direct intervention (victim rescue) services to 160 victims, successfully emancipating them from slavery and assisting in their restoration, while providing a range of targeted services to over 1,000 victims and individuals at risk of sexual exploitation. **During the pandemic, demand for victim services to our organization has skyrocketed by 330 percent, driven in part by a fivefold increase in direct crisis calls from potential trafficking victims.**

Each of the victims we have assisted has suffered from complex and overlapping trauma, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety, dissociation, parasuicidal behavior, and substance abuse. Trafficking-related trauma can lead to a complete loss of identity. A victim we cared for in 2016, for example, had become so heavily trauma bonded to her pimp that while under his grasp, she couldn't remember her own name. Yet, sadly, many of the victims with whom we work are misidentified as so-called "voluntary prostitutes" and are subsequently arrested and incarcerated, with no financial resources from which to pay for their release.

Sex trafficking is a profoundly violent crime. At least 23 percent of trafficking victims in Hawai'i report being first exploited before turning 18, according to a recent report, with the average age of trafficked keiki's initial exposure to exploitation being 11. Based on regular outreach and monitoring, we estimate that approximately 150 high-risk sex trafficking establishments operate in Hawai'i. In a recent report conducted by the State Commission on the Status of Women, researchers from Arizona State University found that 1 in every 11 adult males living in our state buys sex online. When visitors are also counted, that number worsens to 1 in every 7 men walking the streets of our island home and a daily online sex buyer market of 18,614 for O'ahu and a total sex buyer population for the island of 74,362, including both tourists and residents.

ASU's findings are grim, but not surprising to local organizations that provide services to survivors of sex trafficking. Imua Alliance, for example, has trained volunteers to perform outreach to victims in high-risk locations, like strip clubs, massage parlors, and hostess bars. More than 80 percent of runaway youth report being approached for sexual exploitation while on the run, over 30 percent of whom are targeted within the first 48 hours of leaving home. With regard to mental health, sex trafficking victims are twice as likely to suffer from PTSD as a soldier in a war zone.

Greater than 80 percent of victims report being repeatedly raped and 95 percent report being physically assaulted, numbers that are underreported, according to the United States Department of State and numerous trauma specialists, because of the inability of many victims to recognize sexual violence. As one underage survivor told Imua Alliance prior to being rescued, "I can't be raped. Only good girls can be raped. I'm a bad girl. If I *want* to be raped, I have to *earn* it."

Accordingly, we support measures to advance our state's ability to stop sexual slavery, including this measure's effort to ensure that survivors have the direct financial assistance needed to heal. **Too often, survivors of sexual exploitation cannot afford housing, health care, mental health services, and other basic needs, which prevents them from obtaining a secure, safe, and sustainable life.** This measure would go a long way toward resolving that problem. Slavery has no place in paradise. Together, we can end exploitation on our shores.

Kris Coffield · Executive Director, Imua Alliance · (808) 679-7454 · kris@imuaalliance.org

HB-552

Submitted on: 1/28/2023 12:09:20 PM

Testimony for HUS on 1/31/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dara Carlin, M.A.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Stand in SUPPORT.