



ANDRÉ JACQUE

STATE SENATOR • 1ST SENATE DISTRICT

Phone: (608) 266-3512

Fax: (608) 282-3541

Sen.Jacque@legis.wi.gov

State Capitol - P.O. Box 7882

Madison, WI 53707-7882

*Testimony before the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
Senator André Jacque
February 11, 2021*

Chairman Wanggaard and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you in support of Senate Bill 26, legislation modeled after current law in the states of Florida and Washington, to attack the growing scourge of human trafficking in Wisconsin by imposing a mandatory \$5,000 surcharge on individuals convicted of patronizing/soliciting prostitutes or keeping a place of prostitution. I am particularly grateful to Rep. Brandtjen, Sen. Taylor and Sen. Wanggaard for their longstanding involvement with this legislation. This change has been suggested by investigators, prosecutors and victims' support and advocacy groups as a means to address present penalties for soliciting prostitution which provide an insufficient deterrent, citing a high incidence of repeat solicitation offenses by many individuals with enough disposable income to quietly pay existing fines. SB 26 will also fill a vital role of helping to build capacity for helping victims of human trafficking and supporting law enforcement efforts to identify and stop it.

Last session, this legislation passed the Assembly Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee on a bi-partisan basis, the Senate Judiciary & Public Safety Committee on a 5-0 vote, and the full Senate on 32-0 vote. It was placed on the calendar for the last Assembly floor date, but unfortunately not taken up before the chamber adjourned. Gov. Evers has publicly indicated his support for last session's identical bill in a letter to the legislature. This legislation was formally supported last session by the Badger State Sheriffs Association, Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association, Wisconsin Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriff's Association, Eye Heart World, United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS), Lutheran Office of Public Policy, HOPELINE, the City of Milwaukee, and Children's Hospital of Wisconsin.

The federal government acknowledges the link between prostitution and trafficking in women and children as a form of modern day slavery. Unfortunately, Milwaukee has become known as the human trafficking capital of the Midwest and the problem has been rapidly spreading across Wisconsin, particularly to the Fox Valley and the Green Bay area.

As in Florida and Washington (which have been recognized by the Polaris Project for utilizing best practices in the fight against human trafficking), SB 26 creates in Wisconsin an additional \$5,000 surcharge for violations of patronizing prostitutes, soliciting prostitutes, pandering, and keeping a place of prostitution, and equally splits the proceeds of the surcharge to increase the appropriations for Internet Crimes Against Children task forces and services for Sex Trafficking Victims (Wis. Stats. 20.437 (1) (e)). Demand for prostitution drives human trafficking and a wide variety of societal costs, and increasing the civil penalty will significantly enhance deterrence while funding important victim services and enforcement efforts.

Thank you for your consideration of this vitally important legislation.



JANEL BRANDTJEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 22ND ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Let me begin by saying thank you to Chairman Wanggaard and the members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety for holding this hearing today on SB 26, regarding sexual slavery through coercion and intimidation and the sexual exploitation of children.

The human trafficking and sex slavery industry in the United States is a growing concern for all of us. The use of drugs, violence and fear to trap the most vulnerable women (and men) into these horrible situations is becoming more common and more profitable. Recently, there have been several news stories of women being brought into this country under false promises and are then led into a life of prostitution. Young people are terrorized with threats of retaliation on their families and young children are lead into slavery without their families having any idea what has happened. The exploitation of children is something no civilized society should allow. To rob our children of their childhood innocence for profit or pleasure, using blackmail, is certainly something we can work together to stop.

Regrettably, Wisconsin has been receiving much attention in the past few years regarding this issue. Even though Milwaukee has been called a “hub” for this horrific activity, human trafficking rings have been exposed all across the state.

This bill would simply add a surcharge of \$5000 for those seeking to patronize a prostitute, pandering, or operating a place of prostitution. Half of the money would be used for treatment and services for sex-trafficking victims and the other half for criminal investigative operations and law enforcement relating to internet crimes against children. Both of these programs have served Wisconsin well and will benefit greatly from the additional funding.

The bill is supported by the United Migrant Opportunity Service (UMOS) and was supported by the City of Milwaukee and law enforcement last session.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address this issue.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Janel Brandtjen".

State Representative Janel Brandtjen