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TO: Members of the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

FROM: Rep. André Jacque

DATE: Sept. 7, 2017

RE: Assembly Bill 435

Chairman Spiros and colleagues on the Assembly Criminal Justice Committee,

Thank you for your consideration of Assembly Bill 435, modeled after current Florida law, which I have brought forward with Senators Van Wanggaard and Lena Taylor 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. 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.

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.

Under Florida state law, there is a \$5,000 surcharge (increased from \$500 beginning in January 2013) that was created for solicitation of a prostitute in addition to the other penalties assessed. AB 435 would similarly create in Wisconsin an additional \$5,000 surcharge for violations of patronizing prostitutes, soliciting prostitutes, pandering, and keeping a place of prostitution, and equally split the proceeds of the surcharge to increase the appropriations for Internet Crimes Against Children task forces and services for Sex Trafficking Victims under Wis. Stats. 20.437 (1) (e). Demand for prostitution drives human trafficking and a wide variety of societal costs, and appropriately increasing the civil penalty will significantly enhance deterrence while funding important victim services and enforcement efforts.

Thank you for your consideration.

Testimony of State Senator Lena C. Taylor
Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Assembly Bill 435
September 7, 2017

Good afternoon Chairman Spiros and Committee Members. I want to thank the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding Assembly Bill 435.

Brad Myles, CEO of Polaris, a global anti-trafficking advocacy group was quoted as saying “If we’re serious about ending sex trafficking, it’s very clear that something needs to be done about the buyers.”

I couldn’t agree more. We need to do everything we can to reduce the demand for prostitution and this bill creates another disincentive in the effort to curb prostitution and eradicate human trafficking. Today, we seek to join a national push that addresses the disparity in a Department of Justice report that indicated some 43,000 women, nationally, were arrested for prostitution-related offenses in 2010, compared to just 19,000 men (which included buyers of sex, traffickers, and male sex workers).

Today, law enforcement and legislative bodies have come to better understand the contributing factors and underlying causes that permeate the sex trade industry. Thanks to local and statewide groups like the Human Trafficking Task Force of Greater Milwaukee, there heightened education and awareness. This has led to a need to rethink policing, charging, and punishments connected to these crimes.

As a state, we have some of the toughest laws in the country to deal with the sex trades. But truth be told, more arrests continue to be for prostitution than solicitation. Even when fines have been levied at the buyers, the penalties were clearly not stiff enough to get the attention. I think we will get their attention now. I think we will send a definitive message that Wisconsin is not open for this kind of business.

I have had the opportunity to work with local activists and organizations in Milwaukee, who are in the community, on the ground, standing on the street corner doing this work. I have taken food and resources to help Wisconsin residents caught up in this nightmare of sex-trafficking. I am working alongside them to give hope and to stop this industry that is devastating the lives of Wisconsin families and children.

AB 435 is a strong deterrent and through the \$5,000 surcharge created by this bill, we will better be able to support critically needed supportive treatment and services for Wisconsin sex-trafficking victims. We will help to generate funds to support the tough work of law enforcement in protecting our children targeted by Internet crimes. Therefore, I hope you will join us in supporting AB 435.

Thank you for your time.