



January 24, 2024

**Assembly Bill 981—Relating to: instruction on human trafficking in licensed schools of barbering, schools of cosmetology, and specialty schools.**

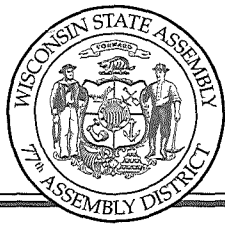
**Assembly Committee on Jobs, Economy, and Small Business Development**

Good morning Chairman Representative Rick Gundrum, Vice-Chairman Representative David Armstrong, and Members of the Assembly Committee on Jobs, Economy and Small Business Development. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bill 981—Relating to: instruction on human trafficking in licensed schools of barbering, schools of cosmetology, and specialty schools. I would also like to thank Representative Joy Goeben and Senator LaTonya Johnson for their collaboration with me on this bipartisan bill created for recommendation by the Assembly Speaker's Task Force on Human Trafficking. The partnership displayed between representatives of both parties on these bills highlights the need for comprehensive legislation in our state to address the crisis of human trafficking.

Today, I would like to express my strong support for AB 981 because of the opportunity it presents to combat human trafficking in our state's beauty and personal care businesses. Those who work in service industries related to beauty and personal grooming are more likely than average members of the public to encounter both perpetrators and survivors of human trafficking. Sex traffickers may bring trafficked persons to hair stylists, hair removal salons, or nail salons for services in order to make them more attractive to sex buyers. Conversely, labor traffickers may force victims to work in the hair, nail, or spa industries under conditions of coercion or indentured servitude.

Under current law, there are no requirements for employees of these industries, such as hairstylists, nail technicians, and estheticians, to undergo any sort of training pertaining to human trafficking, despite the large amount of contact they are likely to have with this issue. Education and awareness are crucial components for the abolition of human trafficking, especially in spaces where exploitation is more likely to take place. We must do better in equipping our industry professionals to identify and report instances of trafficking.

AB 981, as amended, would ensure that beauty service professionals receive adequate training on human trafficking and commercial exploitation. Initially, this bill sought to require the Department of Justice, in consultation with the Technical College System Board, the Department of Safety and Professional Services, and the Cosmetology Examining Board, to identify and establish industry specific materials for use in providing instruction to students in schools of barbering, schools of cosmetology, and specialty schools in the recognition and reporting of human trafficking. Further, under the original bill, DSPS and the Cosmetology Examining Board would be tasked with requiring that schools of barbering, schools of cosmetology, and specialty schools provide instruction on the dynamics of exploitation including vulnerabilities that put



WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE

**Shelia Stubbs**

77TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

people at risk of being trafficked and how to recognize and report suspected human trafficking as identified by DOJ under the bill.

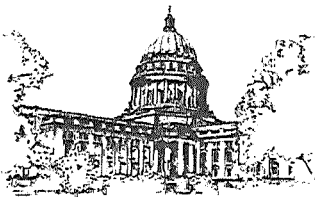
After discussing this bill with the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DPS), we amended the requirements in this bill to apply to licensure instead of education. DPS was concerned that by imposing these requirements on specialty schools, we would exclude professionals moving to Wisconsin from other states. Since few other states have human trafficking education requirements for their schools of cosmetology and barbering, professionals seeking a license in Wisconsin via reciprocity would potentially run into difficulties completing their licensing requirements.

Assembly Amendment 1 to AB 981 requires applicants for licensure in these targeted professions to complete a DPS-approved course on human trafficking. It also requires that persons who hold licenses complete a DPS-approved human trafficking course every two years as a condition of license renewal. At the guidance of DPS, we drafted another amendment, Assembly Amendment 1 to Assembly Amendment 1 to AB 981, removing the requirement to complete the course for license renewal. As a result of this sequence of amendments, beauty service professionals would only be required to complete human trafficking training once as a condition of acquiring their initial license. By applying the human trafficking education requirement to obtaining a license, rather than to completing cosmetology, barbering, or specialty school education, we will ensure that industry professionals receive critical human trafficking education.

Thank you for the opportunity today to speak more about my support for AB 981 and the need for comprehensive human trafficking education for beauty and personal care industry professionals. By raising awareness and empowering bystanders to intervene in trafficking situations, we will take the first necessary steps toward a trafficking-free Wisconsin. I am happy to answer any questions.

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# STATE SENATOR LaTonya Johnson

WISCONSIN STATE SENATE

6TH DISTRICT

Good morning Chairman Gundrum and members of the committee. Thank you for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 981 (AB 981)--which would have Wisconsin join states like Ohio and Tennessee by adding human trafficking awareness education as a required subject in our state's cosmetology and barbering curriculum.

The beauty and cosmetology industry provides essential services that enhance well-being and self-confidence. However, this focus on appearance makes it a breeding ground for human trafficking, both exploitation of vulnerable individuals and a means for traffickers to groom and control victims. Sex traffickers exploit the industry by utilizing salons for victim "makeovers," while labor traffickers force victims to work under exploitative conditions.

AB 981 tackles this issue head-on by emphasizing education and awareness, and helping to ensure that those professionals most likely to encounter human trafficking in the workplace are able to identify it. Understanding the dynamics of human trafficking, identifying red flags, and knowing how to report suspicions are vital for empowering these professionals to become frontline heroes in the fight against trafficking.

This bill also builds on the success of 2019 Act 27, a bipartisan bill that I co-authored with Rep. Joel Kleefisch, which added human trafficking awareness training to our state's commercial drivers license (CDL) programs. That curriculum was developed in a collaboration between DOJ, DOT, and the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS); and we envision a similar process for AB 981 between DOJ, WTCS, DSPS, and the Cosmetology and Barbering Examining Board.

We talk a lot about "if you see something, say something," but with human trafficking, the problem is often that you don't see it at all. If you don't know what to look for, victims of exploitation can easily pass unnoticed. Trained professionals will be better equipped to identify and report potential trafficking situations, giving vulnerable individuals a lifeline and increasing chances of intervention.

The bill will also empower professionals themselves to recognize and respond to their own potential exploitation, ensuring their safety and well-being. By prioritizing training and awareness, AB 981 will put traffickers on notice that the beauty industry is not a safe place for them to operate.

Human trafficking is a heinous crime that steals lives and destroys futures. AB 981 offers a valuable opportunity to combat it from within the beauty industry. By equipping professionals with knowledge and tools, we can create a network of awareness that empowers intervention and prevents exploitation.

Once again, thank you to committee members for your consideration of this important piece of legislation, and thank you to my co-authors--Rep. Stubbs, Rep. Goeben, and Sen. Taylor for their work on this bipartisan bill.



# JOY GOEBEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 5<sup>th</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

January 24, 2024

## **Assembly Committee on Jobs, Economy, and Small Business Development Testimony in Support of AB 981**

Thank you Chairman Gundrum and members of the committee for hearing AB 981.

I believe that educating beauty and grooming professionals is a crucial step in combating the wicked crime of human trafficking.

Those that work in this industry often have close and trusting relationships with their clients. This unique position provides an opportunity to recognize signs of human trafficking and contribute to the prevention and identification of potential victims. By imparting relevant knowledge and skills, we empower these professionals to become advocates for those who may be vulnerable to exploitation.

Integrating educational programs within beauty and grooming training will equip professionals with the tools needed to identify red flags, engage in conversations with clients, and report suspicions to the appropriate authorities.

Moreover, the beauty and grooming industry attracts a diverse and inclusive group of individuals. As cosmetologists often serve clients from various backgrounds, ethnicities, and socio-economic statuses, they are uniquely positioned to contribute to the broader awareness of human trafficking across different communities. Education in the cosmetology industry can serve as a catalyst for a more widespread understanding of this issue, fostering a united front against human trafficking.

Thank you,

*Joy Goeben*





## WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: Members, Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety  
Members, Committee on Workforce Development & Economic Opportunities  
Members, Committee on Jobs, Economy, and Small Business

FROM: David Earleywine, Associate Director

DATE: January 24, 2024

RE: Support for AB-970, AB-971, AB972, AB-973, AB-974, AB-976, AB-978,  
AB-979, AB-980, AB-981, Human Trafficking

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On behalf of the Wisconsin Catholic Conference, the public policy voice of the bishops of Wisconsin, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the following bills being heard in this and other Assembly committees today:

AB-970, Sex Offender Registration for Certain Crimes  
AB-971, Human Trafficking of Adults at Risk for the Purpose of Commercial Sex Acts  
AB-972, Solicitation for Prostitution and Providing a Penalty  
AB-973, Mandatory Training Regarding Human Trafficking  
AB-974, Civil Cause of Action for Human Trafficking and Trafficking a Child  
AB-976, Testimony of a Child in a Criminal Proceeding for a Human Trafficking Crime  
AB-978, Creation of a Human Trafficking Council  
AB-979, Human Trafficking Victim Services Grant Program  
AB-980, Displaying a Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline Poster  
AB-981, Instruction on Human Trafficking in Certain Specialty Schools (Barbering)

Human trafficking constitutes one of the gravest offenses against basic human rights and dignity. It preys upon the most vulnerable men, women, and children, who are frequently coerced into performing the most degrading forms of human labor. It denies everything that a civilized society stands for and that Catholic social teaching espouses: the protection of human dignity and human rights; the preferential option for the poor; the call to family and community; the rights of workers; and solidarity.

As of 2022, it is estimated that over 27 million people are victims of human trafficking.<sup>1</sup> This can take the form of sexual exploitation, forced marriage, coerced and forced labor, child soldiers, and more. That number includes more than 3.3 million children. In

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<sup>1</sup> International Labour Organization, *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery*, (September 2022)  
[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms\\_854733.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_854733.pdf)



## WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

Wisconsin specifically, the National Human Trafficking Hotline reports nearly 800 cases involving over 1,600 victims with the vast majority suffering from sex trafficking.<sup>2</sup>

The Catholic Church, along with other religious and secular institutions, is involved in combating human trafficking both nationally and internationally. In the U.S., the Catholic Coalition Against Human Trafficking, which consists of about twenty Catholic organizations, was one of the groups that helped draft the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 and its subsequent reauthorizations.<sup>3</sup> Catholic women religious have been at the forefront of anti-trafficking work.<sup>4</sup> They and countless other lay Catholics reach out directly to persons who are being trafficked to help with housing, transportation, childcare, employment, etc. In Milwaukee, the newly established St. Bakhita House, in partnership with Franciscan Peacemakers Clare Community, provides supportive community housing for women who are seeking to escape sex trafficking. Across Wisconsin, among people of every faith, awareness is growing that sex trafficking is destroying lives and wreaking havoc on families and communities.

The WCC, therefore, applauds the Speaker and those involved with the bipartisan task force for bringing forward these bills. These bills strive to give victims of human trafficking some hope that they will be delivered from their bondage and help prevent others from being ensnared in this violent and degrading world. We strongly urge the Legislature to pass these bills.

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<sup>2</sup> Spectrum News 1, *How big of a problem is sex trafficking in Wisconsin?* (April 24, 2023) <https://spectrumnews1.com/wi/milwaukee/news/2023/04/19/part-1--how-big-of-a-problem-is-sex-trafficking-in-wisconsin->

<sup>3</sup> The Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking (CCOAH) <https://www.usccb.org/offices/anti-trafficking-program/coalition-catholic-organizations-against-human-trafficking>

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking: <https://sistersagainstrafficking.org>