

House Judiciary Committee - HB 102 - April 10, 2019

My name is Letty Diswood. I am a board member of the Delaware Coalition for Open Government, as well as ^{a member of} the League of Women Voters. I will briefly discuss three points that are germane to the topic of child sex trafficking and to the function of this Committee.

1. The perfect example of the horrors of child sex trafficking was a Delaware domiciled limited liability company - Backpage.com LLC. Backpage.com has a history of facilitating child sex trafficking in Delaware, across the United States, and in other countries. One year ago Backpage.com was shut down by the federal government for the crimes of child sex trafficking, prostitution, as well as money laundering through affiliated Delaware LLCs. Backpage.com is also the perfect example of an additional serious problem.

2. That problem is that Delaware LLCs are misused as fronts for crimes, including narcotics trafficking, embezzlement, bribery, and securities fraud. Last August, DelCOG and seven other Delaware organizations, including the League of Women Voters of Delaware, the Civic League for New Castle County, and American Promise Delaware petitioned then-Attorney General Matt Denn to appoint an Independent Counsel to investigate the abuses of the Delaware LLC Act. AG Denn deferred the Petition to the leadership of the General Assembly, but to our knowledge nothing has been done.

3. Ignoring the problem is not the solution. Consequently, will this Committee consider recommending an investigation to address the abuses and criminal activity of limited liability companies like Backpage.com?

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My name is Nick Wasileski; I have lived in Newark for more than 30 years. I am the President of the Delaware Coalition for Open Government (DelCOG). DelCOG promotes the Freedom of Information Act, open government, and government accountability.

DelCOG supports HB 102. Assisting innocent victims of human trafficking is necessary and urgent, especially when the victims are often children who had been kidnapped, baited, or cajoled, and sold into sex slavery. As these children grew into adults, they faced another kind of victimization: that is, they were victimized by a misguided legal system that labeled them criminals - prostitutes. Laws that punish the most vulnerable among us are not indicative of a fair justice system. HB 102 addresses this injustice that stigmatizes the innocent whose lives were grievously injured by no fault of their own. HB 102 is a good start by reversing unjust laws and by helping victims expunge criminal records.

Last summer I attended a human trafficking symposium at Wilmington University. The keynote speaker was Barbara Amaya, who as a 16 year old child, was kidnapped and sold into sex slavery in the United States. She told us the story about her kidnapping, being sold by her kidnapper to her new owner, her life in sex slavery, the depravity of prostitution, the physical abuse by her owner and others, and how she finally aged out and escaped from prostitution.

In her own words Barbara Amaya says:

"I am a survivor who has overcome adversity and abuse. I am advocating for anti human trafficking legislation, and survivors and victims of trafficking. The fact that I am alive today to write about my experiences is a miracle."

HB 102 addresses the issue of sex slavery, helps victims expunge their criminal records, and sends a message that future common sense legislation is possible. Lastly, how is it possible that sex slavery exists today, especially in the United States? What more can this Committee and the General Assembly do to solve the problem and to help the innocent victims of human trafficking?