

Support HB 416: Training for Abortion Facility Personnel to Identify Victims of Human Trafficking

by Rep. Debbie Riddle

Goal: Texas Alliance for Life supports amending Texas law to require employees of licensed abortion facilities and ambulatory surgical centers that perform more than 50 abortions per year to undergo mandatory training and education on identifying victims of human trafficking.

Texas Law: Texas law currently requires all officers licensed by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement to undergo mandatory training and education on the trafficking of persons. Sec. 1701.258, Occupations Code.

There is currently no requirement that abortion facility employees undergo similar training.

Sex Trafficking and Abortion: Abortion facility employees are uniquely situated to identify and assist victims of sex trafficking.

According to the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards¹, the three main elements used to control victims are force, fraud, and coercion.

- Force involves physical violence such as beatings, rape, and/or physical confinement. It can also include kidnapping, denial of food/water, denial of medical care/medications, denial of contraceptives/condoms, forced abortion, forced to give up custody of children, forced to use drugs, forced participation in violent acts or sexual acts, and forced to lie.

A recent study published in the peer-reviewed *Annals of Health Law*² discusses the prevalence of abortion in the sex trafficking business:

- 107 women were surveyed. Of the 66 women who answered the question on the “number of pregnancies they had during trafficking,” 47 women (71.2%) reported at least one pregnancy, and 14 of those women (21.2%) reported five or more pregnancies.

¹ “Law Enforcement Role: Combating Human Trafficking in the State of Texas,” Course #3270, Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education, Revised June 2013.

² “The Health Consequences of Sex Trafficking and Their Implications for Identifying Victims in Healthcare Facilities” by Laura J. Lederer and Christopher A. Wetzel, *Annals of Health Law*, Winter 2014.

- More than half of the 67 women who reported a pregnancy (55.2%) reported at least one abortion, with 20 respondents (29.9%) reporting multiple abortions.
- Without accounting for underreporting, the 67 women collectively reported 114 abortions.

There is also evidence that suggests many of these abortions are forced upon the woman.

- While only 34 respondents answered the question whether the abortion was forced upon them, 18 of those women (52.9%) answered that one or more of their abortions was at least partly forced upon them.
- One woman reported 17 forced abortions.

Background: Human trafficking, including sex trafficking, is a prevalent problem in the United States, and particularly Texas. The following information is from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services:

- An estimated 18,000 foreign nationals are trafficked into the United States each year. According to the Polaris Project, the number of US citizens trafficked within our own borders are even higher, with an estimate of more than 200,000 American children at high risk for trafficking into the sex industry each year. ICE Operation Predator estimates that 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 10 boys in the United States are sexually exploited before they reach adulthood. Child trafficking, child pornography, and international sex tourism now generates billions of dollars a year worldwide.
- As of January 2006, of all human trafficking victims certified in the United States, 25% of them were in Texas, the majority of whom were in Houston. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Rescue and Restore Campaign Results, April 2004 thru January 2006).