

To Whom It May Concern:

It has come to our attention that in the course of the discussion of Senate Bill 2190, a bill that repeals the Parental Notice of Abortion Act, misinformation and harmful narratives about human trafficking and survivors' experiences have been propagated. Thank you for allowing us to clarify a few points in order to shift the narrative to one that better reflects the experiences of survivors.

Repealing the Parental Notice of Abortion Act in Illinois would not result in more child trafficking. It would also not impact the ability for child trafficking victims to be identified.

Beliefs that repealing the Parental Notice of Abortion Act would result in these things are rooted in harmful myths about the extremely complex issue of human trafficking and exploitation.

These myths rely on an erroneous belief that parents and/or social networks are always safe and healthy individuals in a young person's life and that, if notified, they would assist in an intervention to help the young person. However, what we know is that victims are often lured into a trafficking or exploitative situation because they lack parental and/or familial support. Traffickers often come along to fill such a void in the young person's life. In fact, traffickers can be and often are the young person's parents or family members. Therefore, requiring a young person to notify a parent/guardian in these circumstances could be extremely dangerous and could lead to unsafe abortions or other acts of violence. For example, if a victim becomes pregnant and her trafficker does not want her to be, they will most likely use violence against her to cause her to miscarry. They will not bring her to a safe healthcare provider, who will then identify her as a trafficked individual.

These myths are also born out of a common but misguided "rescue mentality," which puts the beliefs, values, and preferences of society over what the survivor prefers and identifies as safe. Putting the preferences of society first undermines survivors' agency and autonomy, which are or were already violated at the hands of their trafficker/abuser in the first place. Survivors must be trusted to know what is best for themselves, including what healthcare they need. And solutions to empower people who are victimized should be developed in consultation with, and with deference to, the members of those communities.

When the experiences of survivors are misrepresented, it only works against our efforts to increase the identification of victims and provide trauma-informed services. It makes our collective goal to end human trafficking even harder.

Sincerely,

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