

Hello,

My name is Molly Stevens and I am the Human Trafficking Director for the Colorado Organization for Victim Assistance (COVA). I also sit on the Colorado Human Trafficking Council.

It is necessary to have the crime of violence enhancer on human trafficking due to the violative nature of the crime itself. Human trafficking is the most extreme form of exploitation and is a human rights violation, which often involves excessive violence. Increasing the statute of limitation would hold perpetrators more accountable for the violence they inflict upon victims. In both sex and labor trafficking, offenders often use tactics such as rape, gang rape, starvation, confinement, and beatings. The extent to which these tactics are used is limitless, perpetuating the violence that victims endure.

Increasing the statute of limitations is important for survivors because currently, human trafficking is a low risk, high reward system. The control traffickers have over victims results in the underreporting that we continually see with this crime, making it a low risk system. Research has demonstrated that human trafficking is the fastest growing criminal enterprise, resulting in an incredibly high reward system. Increasing the statute of limitations would increase the risk for traffickers, creating more protection for victims.

While strengthening enforcement of human trafficking is important, it is equally important to ensure we understand the impact this bill could have on victims and survivors. This bill would affect individuals who are labeled as a "bottom," should law enforcement agencies, court systems, and other involved parties fail to understand the intricacies within this role. Bottoms are often viewed as perpetrators due to the recruiting they are forced to carry out by their trafficker. Quite contrarily, bottoms are victims of human trafficking and the recruiting aspect of their role is a direct result of forced criminality. There would be a detrimental impact on victims and survivors, should the system fail to take this into account.

Respectfully,

Molly Stevens, MA