

SUBJECT: Expanding the definition of trafficking

COMMITTEE: Criminal Jurisprudence — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 9 ayes — Moody, Cook, Bhojani, Bowers, Darby, Harrison, Leach, C. Morales, Schatzline

0 nays

WITNESSES: For — Jason Sabo, Children at Risk; Stacy De La Cruz, Shepherd’s Watch Foundation; Lindsey Speed, Traffick911 (*Registered, but did not testify*; Angela Smith, Fredericksburg Tea Party; Lavinia Bertha Masters, Hope SAVES; Jessica Anderson, Houston Police Department; John Wilkerson, Texas Municipal Police Association; AJ Louderback, Texas Sheriffs Regional Alliance; G Sealy Massingill, TMA; Thomas Parkinson)

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Veronikah Warms, Texas Civil Rights Project; Ashley Washington)

BACKGROUND: Some have suggested that expanding the definition of trafficking to include the acts of soliciting and patronizing would remove the burden on certain sex trafficking victims to identify their traffickers.

DIGEST: For the purpose of defining conduct related to the offense of trafficking of persons, HB 844 would expand the definition of “traffic” to include soliciting or patronizing another person by any means.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2023, and would apply only to an offense committed on or after that date.