

Blanchard, Deborah

From: Johannes Benjamin III <iii3joe@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 29, 2019 7:08 PM
To: JudTestimony
Subject: Bill HB 7399

Testimony of Johannes Benjamin III:

In Support of HB 7399 An Act Concerning Legal Protections for the Victims of Human Trafficking and the Protection of Minors from Cyber Exploitation
Judiciary Committee, April 1st, 2019

Distinguished members of the Judicial Committee, my name is Johannes Benjamin III. I am writing to you in support of HB 7399, An Act Concerning Privileged

Communication Made by Victims of Human Trafficking to a Human Trafficking Counselor.

This Bill addresses an important gap in Connecticut's ability to provide effective services to survivors of human trafficking. Currently in Connecticut, a victim's communications with a human trafficking counselor is not confidential. Therapeutic care depends on victims having confidence and trust that they can make honest and complete disclosures about the facts, memories, thoughts, and feelings associated with their victimization. They must be able to confide in counselors without risk that the information they share could be disclosed publicly without their consent. This bill will enable children who have been trafficked to speak openly to trained service providers confidentially. It will also offer additional protection to those children who committed crimes as a direct result of their trafficking and expand the definition of commercial sexual abuse to include online exploitation.

Human trafficking is a horrendous trauma — and victims deserve protection and privacy. Survivors should have the right to decide when, what, and to whom their information is shared, and should not fear disclosure in court.

HB 7399 will facilitate victims access to services and protect children who are victims of this horrific crime. I hope that the Committee will see the importance of strengthening the legislative protection for victims of child trafficking and join me in supporting HB 7399. Thank you for your time and consideration.