

SUBJECT: Increasing the penalty for human trafficking conducted at certain locations

COMMITTEE: Criminal Jurisprudence — favorable, without amendment

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

0 nays

WITNESSES: For — Mary Wells, Breaking the Chains of Human Trafficking; Rebecca Alcozer, Jacquelyn Aluotto, Bridgette Salyer, No Trafficking Zone; Courtney Litvak, No Trafficking Zones; Ebony Noir, NTZ No Sex Trafficking Zone; James B Rice, Texas Counter-Trafficking Initiative; Larry Hill (*Registered, but did not testify*: M Paige Williams, Dallas County Criminal District Attorney John Creuzot; James Parnell, Dallas Police Association; David Batton, Harris County Deputies' Organization FOP 39; Ray Hunt, Houston Police Officers' Union; John Wilkerson, Texas Municipal Police Association; AJ Louderback, Texas Sheriffs' Regional Alliance; Eve Margolis; Roxy D Hall Williamson)

Against — None

BACKGROUND: Concerns have been raised that current law related to trafficking of persons does not provide adequate protection for college students, who may be particularly vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation.

DIGEST: HB 3553 would expand the conduct constituting a first-degree felony of trafficking of persons if the offense was committed on the premises of or within 1,000 feet of the premises of a public, private, or independent higher education institution. Such an offense would be punishable by imprisonment in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice for life or for a term of not more than 99 years or less than 25 years.

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