

Comment Report

HSB 34

A bill for an act relating to certain civil and criminal enforcement activities involving the practice of massage therapy and cosmetology, and human trafficking, and providing penalties.(See HF 452.)

Subcommittee Members: Jones-CH, Bohannon, Westrich

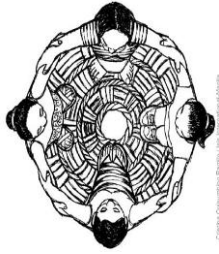
Date: 01/19/2021

Time: 09:00 AM

Location: House Lounge

Name: Amy Campbell

Comment: The Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault partners with culturally specific programs around the state to support survivors of sexual violence, including individuals who have been trafficked. We are concerned that this bill (HSB 34) as not developed in collaboration with the community it is intended to protect, and could in fact have other unintended consequences. We reached out to our partners in the Asian community for their input. They articulate these concerns better than we could, so I'm attaching them to my comments. Thanks for allowing us to submit comments.



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Re: HSB34

Monsoon Asians & Pacific Islanders in Solidarity is a community-based organization providing culturally and linguistically specific services to victims/survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking in Iowa since 2003. We urge lawmakers to meet with Monsoon over the proposed bill, HSB34, so that informed decisions are made after detailed dialogues over the proposal. The proposal would hurt Asian communities vis-a-vis Asian-owned businesses across Iowa if it suggests that all Asian-run massage therapy and salon businesses are trafficking individuals for labor and especially for sex. We must eliminate this kind of damaging stereotyping as we make laws intended to spur Iowa development in a global economy.

In May 2017, the Des Moines Register reported that then-Gov. Terry Branstad signed a bill into law that gives Iowa cities the authority to require licenses for massage parlors, after a resolution repealing a section of Iowa's code that prohibits cities from levying restrictions or requirements on massage therapists that are not "equally enacted or enforced" on other licensed health care practitioners.

Since then, 24 Iowa cities and counties have passed such regulations – either acquire a state massage therapy license or cease operation – and it appears that enforcement has led to few arrests and charges. According to a Des Moines Register report in March 2019, "no major arrests for sex trafficking, racketeering, prostitution or money laundering have happened related to illicit massage parlors in Iowa's capital city" since the passage of Des Moines' ordinance in 2018.

It is crucial for legislators to first conduct an Iowa-specific study of Asian communities, including businesses, instead of relying on any national studies on massage parlors and sex trafficking that mostly cover cities with large Asian populations. This bill should be rooted in findings that come from Asian communities, which are diverse and dispersed across Iowa.

Monsoon supports the end of all forms of human trafficking, and thus we encourage lawmakers to bring in constituents who would be affected by specific laws to discuss proposed legislation as part of a democratic process.