

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 17, 2023

1:02 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Sarah Vance, Chair  
Representative Jamie Allard, Vice Chair  
Representative Ben Carpenter  
Representative Craig Johnson  
Representative David Eastman  
Representative Andrew Gray  
Representative Cliff Groh

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT**

Representative Mike Cronk

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

PRESENTATION(S): ALASKA SURVIVORS OF HUMAN AND SEX TRAFFICKING

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

COURTNEY, representing self  
(No address provided)

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided invited testimony during the presentation on Alaska survivors of human and sex trafficking.

HANNAH, representing self  
(No address provided)

**POSITION STATEMENT** Provided invited testimony during the presentation on Alaska survivors of human and sex trafficking.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[1:02:53 PM](#)

**CHAIR SARAH VANCE** called the House Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. Representatives Carpenter, C. Johnson, Gray, and Vance were present at the call to order. Representatives Groh, Allard, and Eastman arrived as the meeting was in progress.

**PRESENTATION(S): Alaska Survivors of Human and Sex Trafficking**

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CHAIR VANCE announced that the only order of business would be the Alaska Survivors of Human and Sex Trafficking presentation.

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COURTNEY, representing self, provided invited testimony during the Alaska Survivors of Human and Sex Trafficking presentation. She shared her story, recalling that after being released from drug rehabilitation in 2014, she had no support system in the community and no place to live. Unsure of where to go, she had been at an Anchorage McDonalds when a man who looked "clean" and was "kind and inviting" offered to help her. She thought he would help her in the way she needed help.

COURTNEY continued that the man took her to a house in a middle-class neighborhood, which was empty except for a bed and a dresser. She stated that in the house there were a variety of drugs, and when she was offered the drugs, she accepted, as she was just out of drug rehabilitation. She stated that the man took her shopping and made her promises, but there was no sexual activity at this point. She stated that this grooming went on for weeks. After this she was taken to another nice house to meet a woman who continued to groom her by teaching her how to act in front of the man and his friends. She expressed the understanding that this woman had been in her situation years before. She had asked to use the phone at this point, but the woman refused this request.

COURTNEY stated that after leaving this house she was expected to meet the man's sexual desires on demand. He controlled her every move and manipulated her thoughts. This escalated into daily abuse, and from this he would make her have sex with other people, which became her routine. She said she never knew what the situation would be with the different people, as some just

wanted to talk, while others would be violent. She described being "tired and beat down at this point," as she was raped multiple times and forced to have sex with both men and women. She described being so repulsed, numb, exhausted, and strung-out that she would vomit. She said that the situation felt hopeless. She stated that she started believing that her value was based on her physical appearance and money. She recalled feeling like "trash."

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COURTNEY said that she had given up at this point and was not trying to please anyone. She stated that in 2017 she was put in a hotel room with other women who were waiting to be flown out of state. She was flown to San Antonio, Texas, and taken from the airport to a nice neighborhood. She expressed that no one would believe that this was happening in this neighborhood. She described the house as having cameras and multiple locks on the doors. At this point her routine included showering, sex, and then being given drugs, which she no longer wanted. She stated that she was strapped down and given intravenous drugs. She said she ran away multiple times, but each time she was caught, drugged, taken home, and beaten. She recalled her experience going to the hospital with a broken ankle, adding that she knew better not to speak. She stated that an officer came to the hospital, but out of fear she told them they were mistaken. She stated that with the broken ankle she was worthless to the man, as he only cared about power and money. She stated that he stopped giving her drugs, so she went into detox.

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COURTNEY stated that in 2019, the house was raided. At this point, she said, she was put in a car while the man was allowed to stay in the house. For the first time, she was able to tell everything that had happened to her; however, she was charged with prostitution, while the man was not prosecuted. She stated that this charge is still on her record. Outside of the house she was allowed to leave the police car, so she returned to the house. She explained that she felt helpless because the police would not help. She went back to the routine, but her identification card had been taken by the man.

COURTNEY stated that she was then taken to a patron who did not want sex, and he let her telephone her mother, who sent her a new identification card to the patron's address, which she was able to hide from the man. She described the opportunity that

allowed her to run. She described this as a "divine appointment." Her handler had fallen asleep, the security guard watching the door was gone, the cameras were shut off, and she had her identification card. She said that suddenly every door was open for her to be free, and with the help of her family, she was able to fly home. She stated that her family met her at the airport where she felt love for the first time in years. She discussed her healing journey, which included a lot of "heart work," counseling, and prayer. She talked about the disassociation and physical trauma she experienced. She concluded by informing the committee that she is now married with two children. She expressed the opinion that the laws need to be changed.

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CHAIR VANCE pointed out that this happened a short time ago and thanked Courtney for her courage.

[1:34:48 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EASTMAN thanked Courtney for the testimony and her bravery. He acknowledged that the system failed her. He asked whether any individuals she had been forced to spend time with were convicted of any crimes.

COURTNEY responded in the negative.

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REPRESENTATIVE GROH thanked Courtney and asked whether the man was ever prosecuted.

COURTNEY stated that from her understanding he has not been prosecuted. In response to a follow-up question, she stated that she has never been interviewed by the authorities or had any type of follow up.

REPRESENTATIVE GROH commented that this is very sad, as the statute of limitations have now expired.

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REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER acknowledged that there was no "fixing this" for the victim(s). Further, he opined that there was no law strong enough to impose on the perpetrators of these crimes.

CHAIR VANCE discussed her desire to expunge these types of records.

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REPRESENTATIVE EASTMAN requested any takeaways that the committee should have.

COURTNEY stated that telling her story may give others bravery to step forward and encourage them to overcome the feelings of impending doom.

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REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD thanked the presenter and agreed with Representative Carpenter.

CHAIR VANCE asked what Courtney would say to other victims right now.

COURTNEY emphasized what worked for her, which was prayer.

[1:43:13 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 1:43 p.m. to 1:44 p.m.

[1:44:19 PM](#)

CHAIR VANCE introduced the next testifier.

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HANNAH, representing self, provided invited testimony during the Alaska Survivors of Human and Sex Trafficking presentation.. She discussed her childhood, stating that her mother abandoned her, and her father left her with her grandfather, who molested her. She stated that she had not been educated on how this was wrong, and her grandfather always bought her a gift after it happened, so she learned at a very young age to trade a part of herself. She said that she was promiscuous as a teenager, smoking marijuana and drinking, and at 16 years old she was addicted to pills. At 18 years old she started dancing at a strip club in Anchorage, living in the basement. It was there she was visited by a man who would come in every weekend for two months with different women. She stated that the women were dressed in nice clothes and would give her money. She stated that others at the strip club told her that the man was a

"Gorilla Pimp," which she described as a violent pimp. Eventually he took her to a nice house with other women, who gave her drugs. She stated that in the house there were many phonelines ringing, as this man owned six escort services. One woman specifically groomed her with the promise of drugs and took her on a call with a client, where they both had sex with him. During the following days, she said that she was in a "drug coma," and this was all she was thinking about. She stated that the other women were giving her beautiful clothes and more.

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HANNAH talked about the first time her perpetrator beat her, stating that he took her identification card. She expressed the understanding that he owned five houses and favored certain women. She commented about the lack of food available for her to eat. Her life consisted of seeing 10 to 12 dates per day, she said, all to get high. She said all the money she made had to be handed to her perpetrator. She described not wanting to leave because she felt like she was "part of something." At one point, he cut off all her hair for buying drugs with "his" money. She also got in trouble for buying herself feminine care products. She expressed the impression that her perpetrator was well connected in the community. She discussed how some of the clients were wealthy and important people in the community, including a judge and a teacher.

HANNAH talked about "the box," which was a small space that girls were put into for days for punishment. Eventually, two girls had disappeared, and she expressed the understanding that they had been killed because they tried to leave. She recalled a story of how she and another girl were pitted against each other and beaten.

[2:06:27 PM](#)

HANNAH discussed her addiction and how it was out of control, suggesting that this kept her in captivity. She described how the perpetrator and all the girls went to the Alaska State Fair "as a family," and she indicated that the girls would fight for his attention. She recounted various stories she had witnessed that involved the other girls. She described one client who had been interested in her life and her perpetrator's life, and she eventually left the perpetrator and went to this client's house, who also sold drugs. She stated that she thought he was nice; however, this man ended up being more violent. After a

particularly bad beating, she stated that she returned to her first perpetrator, who told her she was worthless without him. She stated that he sent her to work that night with a bloody face.

[2:19:00 PM](#)

HANNAH discussed how she could not call her father because of shame. Because of a conflict with the other girls, she said that she returned to the second perpetrator, who had picked up some other girls, but these girls were also jealous, and this caused the second perpetrator to beat her with a belt all over her body and lock her in a closet. She stated that this was the worse beating she ever received. She was able to run from this situation, and she went to a client's house, who made her leave because she was too beaten to have sex. She returned to the second perpetrator, where she went back to work. He accused her again of stealing his money, beat her, and then shaved her head. She explained how this took away any confidence she had left.

[2:28:12 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 2:28 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

[2:30:41 PM](#)

HANNAH resumed her story, explaining how the second perpetrator tried to be like her first perpetrator. She stated that she resumed going on dates while wearing a wig, but she feared doing any activities, where he might think she was stealing. She remembered always saying that she was sorry. She recounted how she ran from him again, but the only places she knew where to go were drug houses. The second perpetrator came and picked her up from one of the drug houses, but she ran again. She stated that she had the realization she was going to die, so she called her mother, who she had not seen since she was 13 years old. She stated that she stayed for a week with her mother, but because of the drugs, she went back to the second perpetrator. They traveled to Washinton State where they both became clean and got jobs; however, because of the "monotony of the lifestyle" they returned to their previous life. She stated that at this point she knew there was a better life and she wanted out. While in Washington, she stated that she went to the hospital from a severe beating, and the second perpetrator was convicted for the beating. At this point she began prostituting herself.

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HANNAH stated that in Seattle she was approached by federal agents who told her that the first perpetrator was caught, and they wanted her to testify. There was a warrant for her arrest, and the agents told her she would be subpoenaed if she did not go. She stated that she was picked up on the warrant and carried back to Alaska. In the courtroom her testimony was thrown out because she had been under the influence of drugs, and her past was used against her. She was returned to jail in Washington. Once out, she stated that she went back to prostitution because of her addiction and shame.

HANNAH stated that in Washington she had a boyfriend who supplied her with drugs while she prostituted. She stated that her boyfriend's brother had her put an advertisement for prostitution for his girlfriend. She had not realized the girlfriend was only 17 years old, and while driving her to the date she was picked up by the police. She was charged with commercial sex abuse of a minor, but she was only convicted of promoting prostitution. She stated that after jail in Washington, she was clean from drugs and returned to Alaska. She stated that from here she cycled back into the life of drugs, stripping, and prostitution. She expressed the opinion that she returned to this life because it was where she felt needed and wanted. She stated that she and her new boyfriend ended up in prison because of drugs and violence. In jail she underwent treatment in the Transformational Living Community program. She stated that this treatment is faith based, and she discussed the healing she did there, connecting to God. She explained how it took her time before she actually realized that she was a victim, and she expressed the opinion that the drug component played a big part in this. She stated that now she is five years clean and a mother, but she has not completely healed. She explained that she has learned that her past experiences do not define her as a person.

[2:57:00 PM](#)

CHAIR VANCE thanked Hannah for telling her story and she praised her strength. She reminded the committee that the topic feels overwhelming, but it is important. She expressed her desire to prevent future crimes like this from happening. She expressed hope and thanked the presenters.

[2:59:05 PM](#)

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Judiciary Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 2:59 p.m.