Mar 1, 2023

**Contact** Whitney Ray

**Phone** 850-245-0150

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

# Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

## AG Moody Protecting Victims of Human Trafficking




TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody is unveiling legislation to expand protections of human trafficking victims in court proceedings. The legislation provides greater protections in judicial proceedings for minors or victims of certain crimes, including human trafficking. The measure provides that depositions of such individuals will not be allowed absent a showing of good cause. Sen. Danny Burgess will be introducing SB 1208, and Rep. Taylor Yarkosky will be introducing HB 1037.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “As Attorney General, I work every day to stop human trafficking in our state, and this session I am advocating for legislation that will further protect victims, as well as help our law enforcement partners bring traffickers to justice. This legislation will shield victims from unnecessarily reliving traumatic experiences, making it easier for them to come forward and help prosecutors secure convictions for their perpetrators.”

Sen. Danny Burgess said, “Trafficking victims have already gone through so much and they shouldn’t have to needlessly relive those events during court proceedings. I’m proud to work with Attorney General Moody to protect survivors and I will continue to support her efforts to end human trafficking.”

Rep. Taylor Yarkosky said, “Attorney General Moody leads the fight against human trafficking in Florida, and I’m excited to work with her to pass this vital legislation this session. I’m proud to introduce this measure in the Florida House, that protects victims of this heinous crime in court proceedings, where they wouldn’t have to provide traumatic testimony without good cause.”

SB 1208 and HB 1037 provide that in any criminal action where the defendant is charged with certain crimes, depositions are not allowed, without showing a good cause, of certain groups, including human trafficking victims. These victim/witness groups include anyone under the age of 18, anyone with intellectual disabilities or anyone who is a victim or witness. Offenses where this rule is applied include human trafficking, domestic violence, aggravated cyberstalking, custody offenses, human smuggling, lewd or lascivious offenses, child abuse, child neglect and traveling to meet a minor.

The bill requires a written motion that a deposition is necessary to assist at trial to bypass the restrictions. The court may authorize the taking of a deposition if it is proven that the evidence sought is not reasonably available by any other means and the probative value of the testimony outweighs the potential harm to the person being deposed. The court would have to consider several factors when deciding whether to grant the deposition, including whether the victim or witness would suffer moderate psychological harm, and make specific written findings of fact for the basis of its ruling.

To learn how to spot and report human trafficking, visit YouCanStopHT.com.