

HB 882 -- PROSTITUTION

SPONSOR: Coleman (97)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Crime Prevention and Public Safety by a vote of 6 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Legislative Oversight by a vote of 7 to 1.

This bill modifies the offense of promoting prostitution in the first degree. A person may be found guilty of such offense if he or she owns, manages, or operates an interactive computer service with the intent to promote or facilitate the prostitution of another. Such offense shall be a class A felony if the person, in addition to operating an interactive computer service with the intent to promote prostitution while using a facility affecting commerce, acts in reckless disregard of the fact that such conduct contributed to the offense of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. A person injured by such actions may recover civil damages and restitution.

This bill is similar to SB 37 (2019).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that sex trafficking has moved from the streets to the Internet but our laws have not kept up. Congress recently passed legislation to update this, so we have to do it on a state level. Courts have largely interpreted Section 230 of the United States Code to override state laws, so we are unable to enforce ours. Sex trafficking is one of the largest operations and this bill works to combat the buying and selling of human beings online for sex. Human trafficking undermines human dignity and promotes human beings as commodities.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Coleman; Missouri Catholic Conference; Missouri Association of Prosecuting Attorneys; Missouri Office of Prosecution Services; and Melissa Alper, National Council of Jewish Women.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.