

Melissa Matthey
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I am here this evening to follow up on my original testimony to once again support the Howard County Police Department's efforts to gain legislative authority to inspect massage establishments to prevent illegal activities, including prostitution and human trafficking.

Unfortunately, some of these establishments have been known to be a haven for human trafficking and also exploiting women for profit.

With just one inspector for the entire state, the State has been unable to enforce their own regulations. I support the submittal of ~~Delegate~~ ^{Howard County Council 2016-2017} Flanagan's House Bill, that requests Howard County be added to the list of counties enabled to enforce local legislation and provide the Howard County Health Officer, and the Howard County Police Department, with the authority to carry out any laws adopted under the bill. Passing this bill authorizes Howard County to adopt ordinances or regulations relating to massage establishments and the practices of massage therapists, practitioners, and any other individuals who provide massage for compensation.

Thank you for your time.

Grace Community Church – Grace 4 Freedom
8200 Old Columbia Rd, Fulton, MD 20759

Testimony of Grace 4 Freedom
IN SUPPORT OF CB21-2017: MASSAGE LEGISLATION
Before the Howard County Council
March 20, 2017

Good evening,

My name is Angie Persing. I am representing Grace Community Church's anti-trafficking group called Grace 4 Freedom.

Brothels fronting as massage parlors are proliferate in Howard County. At last count, there were 10 of these establishments. Illegal massage parlors are known to harbor victims of human trafficking, which is also on the rise. Criminals know where laws are weak or are not being enforced. They openly advertise these businesses on a site called "rubmaps.com" with erotic massage reviews and the tagline "where fantasy meets reality". In fact, a member of Grace 4 Freedom visited one such parlor two years ago. There was no marketing information for patrons passing by. She asked for a brochure of their massage services and was told that there were no brochures available. She asked for a tour, but was told she could not have one. But, that massage parlor does have information about their services – priced at \$60/hr – on "rubmaps.com".

I am passionate about fighting for a world without modern-day slavery. That passion has taken me across the globe to international centers of sex trafficking. But it is heartbreaking that I don't have to travel outside of my county to find evidence of slavery. It is unnerving to think that I have to be careful to not stumble into a brothel when I simply searched the internet for a new place to get a massage.

We need to consistently inspect and close down the establishments where illegal activities are occurring. Grace 4 Freedom is seeking your support to ensure that there are no more opportunities for human trafficking in Howard County.

Thank you,
Angie Persing

Public Testimony from Elizabeth W. Halley
Community Impact Liaison, The Samaritan Women
And concerned Howard County Citizen

In Support of CB21-2017

Good Evening, County Executive Kittleman, and County Council members, my name is Elizabeth Halley and I serve as volunteer staff at The Samaritan Women, a national charity providing restorative care to survivors of domestic human sex trafficking. I am also a resident of Howard County, and as both a concerned citizen, and an individual deeply entrenched in the fight against human trafficking, I stand before you to offer testimony in favor of CB21-2017, local enabling legislation that would allow our Howard County Police Department the authority to carry out regulations in regard to massage establishments, including: conducting inspections, enforcing criminal and civil violations, searching for evidence of human trafficking, and offering services to victims in need of help.

If someone had told me two years ago I would be standing in front of County Council providing public testimony on behalf of victims of human trafficking, I would have said they were crazy...I didn't have an inkling of the scope of human trafficking, much less that it was actually occurring in my own back yard. But, the sad truth is that human trafficking does occur right here in Howard County and we need to join together to do all we can to stop it, and help those who are trapped in the bonds of modern day slavery. I mentioned that I was providing public testimony on behalf of victims of human trafficking because that is what the enabling legislation we are discussing here is...help for those who are trapped in something too horrible for us to even imagine.

At the Samaritan Women we have provided care for survivors who endured being "sold" through the guise of a massage parlor. I would like to share one resident's story with you... "B" came to us after local authorities investigated the spa where she "worked". She was referred to us by local law enforcement that recognized she was a victim of human trafficking. Now, this did not happen in Howard County, but it just as easily could have..."B" was working in a massage parlor located in an affluent Virginia suburb. She was initially lured to the U.S. by a recruiter in her own country that, unbeknownst to "B", was affiliated with a human trafficking ring right here in the states. Once she arrived, she was met by another affiliate of the trafficking ring and transported to Virginia, where she met her new "boss". Now, this boss, a woman, owned numerous massage parlors across the metro area, trafficking other victims, as she was about to traffic "B". "B" had her identification taken from her, as well as, any personal items she arrived with. She was told she would be providing "massages" and anything else her customers wanted...including sex. The spa charged \$300 for the "Girlfriend Experience", meaning that in their allotted time frame, they could ask their "girlfriend" for anything...if they just wanted sex they received a \$30 discount. Of the \$300, \$70 immediately went to the house, and \$30 went to the booker or call man...so, if you asked "B" how much she was paid, she would tell you \$200...but, if you ask her how much she kept, she would tell you \$0. You see, she had to pay her boss for food, rent, clothing, etc...so, not only was she caught in sex trafficking, but labor debt bondage. On top of that, "B" was told that if she saved \$50,000 she could "buy" a fake husband and

speed up her citizenship process – she was flown to the Midwest, set up a joint checking account with this “husband”, and was told to take lots of selfies with him to support this story. In reality, this was just another scam to take any money she was given and to hold her in debt even longer. Fortunately, “B” was rescued and sent to TSW. Unfortunately, her story is not that uncommon – she was forced to service up to 10 customers a day- and this same scenario could just as easily be happening right here in Howard County. We need to give our police department the tools they need to combat this...and CB21 will do just that.

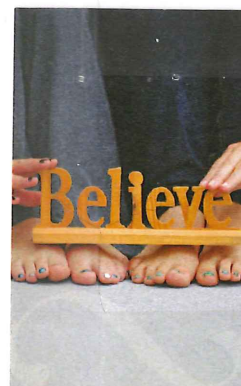
Not only will CB21 help victims of human trafficking, it will help legitimate spa and massage businesses differentiate themselves from those running illicit businesses. You may be familiar with Truckers Against Trafficking, an organization started by truckers to who wanted to aid in the fight against human trafficking and help restore the image of the trucking industry. Through education and awareness efforts, including signs and stickers truckers could put in their windows offering help to victims, trafficking at truck depots and stops has started to decrease. I bring this up because legitimate spas are starting to step forward to do the same thing...they want to support the anti-human trafficking effort, and restore consumer confidence in the spa industry. Recently, The Samaritan Women partnered with Luna Day Spa to host the “Salon Challenge”, an education, awareness and fundraising campaign in support of the fight against human trafficking. An education center was set up in the reception area with printed information on human trafficking that customers could read and take with them. In addition, Luna Day Spa, and owner Sonia Singh, designated 10% of their profits in the January, which was National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month, to be donated to TSW to help survivors of domestic human trafficking.

Legitimate businesses, like Luna Day Spa, want to be part of the solution, and they want to help in solving the problem. Our experience shows that they support enabling legislation, and any tools that aid in the fight against human trafficking. This, in turn, helps assure their customers that they are caring, concerned and legitimate business owners. And that is the type of business that citizens can and will support.

In closing, I ask for your support in moving forward with CB21...enabling legislation that will allow our police force to fight human trafficking, our legitimate spa owners to differentiate themselves in the market place, and the citizens of Howard County to feel secure in the fact that illegitimate organizations that promote human trafficking will not thrive in our backyards.

Respectfully Submitted,


Elizabeth Halley
Community Impact Liaison, The Samaritan Women
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Concerned Howard County Resident




THE SAMARITAN WOMEN

Beth Halley
Community Impact Liaison

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CB21 – 2017

Good evening,

My name is Mavourene Robinson, and I am testifying in support of CB21 – 2017 legislation that will allow the Howard County Health Officer and the Howard County Police Department to regulate the practice of massage parlors and spas. As much as we would like to pretend that it is not an issue in a relatively wealthy and well-educated county like Howard or that these parlors provide services between consenting adults, the truth is that sex by coercion or under financial or physical duress of any kind is rape. It is not a victimless crime. It is immoral and illegal. At present, Howard County is limited in the level of its enforcement and, as evidenced in the reported increased in online advertising for sex services in our County, we are perceived by the criminals as easy prey. Moreover, as known purveyors of human trafficking, illegitimate massage parlors/spas are able to continue these most heinous crimes with little risk to themselves. Our neighbors in Charles County and Washington County have enacted the local legislation necessary to strengthen enforcement of on-site inspections and that allow local Police Departments to be responsive to complaints regarding illegal activities such as prostitution or suspected human trafficking. Each have reported quantifiable decreases in the number of questionable/illegitimate massage parlors. I implore you as the elected officials of Howard County, entrusted with protecting the rights of every citizen, to join in that legislation. To not make ours a sanctuary County for human subjugation and cruelty that is beyond imagination.

This is our opportunity to, “Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

Thank you,

Mavourene Robinson

March 20, 2017

Good Evening and thank you for the opportunity to express my opinion regarding local Howard County Legislation to address human trafficking. My name is Kathy Donnelly and I own a business which has been in Howard County for 25 years. We are located next door to a Day Spa, that was closed down in 2015 by Howard County. What motivates me to testify is the situation that I have witnessed there. It was obviously an "adult spa" frequented only by men and women were not welcome there. I know because several patrons of my business saw the "Day Spa" sign and stopped by there only to be turned away. Bigger than that in my view, was the awareness that the women who worked inside the spa did not come out. The manager would bring in groceries and we could smell food cooking often, but the women did not "come in to work in the morning or leave at night" they were always there. The only time we saw them was when we had some flooding in the building or when the power went out.

It appeared to me to be a very controlled and unhealthy atmosphere. If I owned a legitimate spa I would want these apparently illegal spa's to be inspected and as a business owner I feel it is extremely important for the Howard County Police to be able to inspect these establishments for the protection of its citizens. Thank you for your time.

Bill No. 21-2017 – Howard County –Practice of Massage Regulation

Good evening,

My name is Deborah Hoover. I am a member of Howard County AGAST (Advocacy Group Against Slavery and Trafficking), and one of the co-leaders of Grace 4 Freedom. Also I am a volunteer driver for the survivors of human trafficking who are residents at The Samaritan Women in Baltimore.

First I would like to applaud Howard County Police Department for the strides they have made in combating this horrific crime. I know that they are serious about this plight and are working very hard to combat it.

As a volunteer, I see personally what this crime has done to these women. Once rescued out of trafficking, they have a very long road of recovery. This crime destroys their sense of self and it takes years to recover and the trauma is never fully recoverable.

Since 1996, the State Board of Chiropractic and Massage Therapy Examiners were charged with enforcing state laws for massage therapists and practitioners. But with only 1 inspector for the entire state, this state office has not done inspections for years, allowing the proliferation of illegal massage parlors in Howard County. We are grateful that the initial legislation in Howard County was passed but now they need to add on to that regulation to allow police to request proof of licensure.

Currently Maryland law does not allow for local agencies to conduct inspections of massage establishments. In order to provide massage, the massage practitioner must be licensed. All establishments that are legitimate should have no trouble showing an officer their license. This becomes a problem only if the establishment is working without a license. These disreputable massage establishments have been a haven for illegal activities including human trafficking and prostitution. We need this additional measure to be added so police can effectively investigate, shut down and enforce any and all criminal and civil violations.

These are brothels masquerading as spas, health centers, and wellness clubs. Massage Parlors are known to harbor victims of HT, which is on the rise in this form or other forms. Criminals know where the laws are weak or are not being enforced. They openly advertise these businesses on a site called "rubmaps.com" with erotic massage reviews and the tagline "where fantasy meets reality." At last count, there were about 10 of them, in all parts of Ho Co. The site offers a list of 161 erotic massage parlors in Maryland. Gratefully, many have been closed and now there are 75 active massage parlors in Maryland. Of the 86 that have been closed, only 6 were closed in Howard County.

In July of 2015, women from Grace 4 Freedom visited a disreputable massage parlor in Howard County. There was no marketing information for patrons passing by.

They asked for a brochure of services and were told they didn't have any. When they asked for a tour, they were told they could not have one. No marketing, no brochures, no list of services, no tours, and no massage services for women?? But yes, you guessed it. This massage establishment is listed on rubmaps.com as one of 10 in Howard County where fantasy meets reality for \$60 an hour.

Human Trafficking, a form of modern day slavery, is the fastest growing criminal industry in the world, and it is happening in Howard County. Charles and Washington County have adopted local enabling legislation, and as a result have successfully closed many massage parlors operating as hubs of human trafficking.

We need to be able to inspect, regulate, and close down these establishments where illegal activities are occurring. We are seeking your support to ensure that complaints can be easily investigated and inspections conducted under local authority. Please help us in reducing the opportunity for Human Trafficking activities in Howard County.

Thank you,
Deborah Hoover
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