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# University of Dayton, Ohio (url: <http://www.udayton.edu/index.php>)



## Working to Stamp Out Human Trafficking

**04.12.2010 | Students, Hot Topics, Culture and Society**

University of Dayton senior Alex Kreidenweis of Cincinnati will testify before the Ohio Senate judiciary committee on criminal justice in support of Senate bill 235, which would make human trafficking a felony. Kreidenweis will testify during the hearing scheduled 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 14, at the Ohio statehouse.

"We regard this bill as a first step in the right direction," said Kreidenweis on behalf of The New Abolitionist Movement, a University of Dayton student group he helped found. He is the group's president. "A stand-alone felony would be a strong judicial dissuasion for those looking to create victims in Ohio communities. Furthermore, this bill represents that Ohio recognizes human trafficking is claiming victims in our back yards and empowers prosecutors to litigate against this form of modern-day slavery."

Kreidenweis said 43 states have laws that make human trafficking a stand-alone felony. A recent report issued by the Ohio Trafficking in Persons Commission estimates more than 1,000 women and children are human trafficking victims in the state, according to Kreidenweis.

After passing the judiciary committee on criminal justice, the bill still needs the approval of the Ohio General Assembly, and the signature of Gov. Ted Strickland.

Even then, Kreidenweis suggested the fight isn't finished.

"Ultimately, Senate bill 235 should not signal the end of human trafficking legislation in Ohio. A second-degree felony is certainly a great leap forward, but it alone will not eradicate human trafficking," Kreidenweis said. "We must be cognizant of the victims of this crime and ensure their dignity and well-being are secured and restored. We must proactively strive to ensure those most at risk of becoming victims are armed with awareness and those who are most likely to come into contact with victims are trained to recognize and respond appropriately."

Kreidenweis' crusade for Ohio Senate bill 235 started in January when he was part of a delegation of more than 20 University of Dayton human rights studies faculty and students who participated in Human Trafficking Awareness Day at the Ohio Statehouse. State Senator Teresa Fedor (D-Toledo), who organized the event and sponsored Senate bill 235, invited Kreidenweis to testify this week.

"In January, we were raising the eyebrows of the legislators and senior staffers with the info we gave them. You could tell they had not heard about this," Kreidenweis said. "We wanted to make sure lawmakers were aware of Sen. Fedor's legislation. We raised some awareness. Now, we need to get the bill passed."

The issue of human trafficking is an important one at the University of Dayton.

On March 29, the University of Dayton presented its Oscar Romero Human Rights Award to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Migration and Refugee Services and hosted the quarterly meeting of the Coalition of Catholic Organizations against Human Trafficking. Fedor was in attendance.

In November, Mark Ensalaco, director of the University's human rights studies program, organized the Dayton Human Trafficking Accords international conference at the University of Dayton.

In October 2008, at a campus event held in partnership with the Minneapolis-based Center for Victims of Torture, University of Dayton President Daniel J. Curran and Cincinnati Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk signed a national petition calling for the president of the United States to reject torture.

The University of Dayton is a pioneer in human rights education. In 1998, the University launched the country's first undergraduate human rights program. In 2007, the University began offering a bachelor's degree in human rights studies.

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