

Chairman, Honorable Members of Congress, my colleagues,

I begin with a quote credited to both John Bunyan and later to Mahatma Gandhi:

"It is better in prayer, to have a heart without words, than words without heart."

I pray you all hear my heart in these words as I speak my truth:

In the 1970s a man took a boy, to whom he was related, to a cabin in a rural part of the country. The man told the boy to undress and to wait. The boy obeyed him. Moments later another boy entered the room accompanied by two men. The first boy, upon seeing how scared the second boy looked, asked, "What's the matter, why are you so scared?" The second boy replied, in shock and disbelief, "You don't know, you don't know!" The man took the second boy into an adjoining cabin and the two men proceeded to violently rape the first boy.

I am the first boy and that was the first time I was trafficked.

I was trafficked for four years. I survived physical abuse, sexual abuse, mental and emotional abuse, sex trafficking and torture over the course of more than 13 years of my childhood.

And I managed to graduate high school. I graduated college. And I graduated law school.

But know this - there are no survivors who stand alone in their recovery - survivors need help, they need food and shelter, they need an education, they need counseling and recovery services, they need good and fair employment, they need peer support, they need the very provisions of the TVPA, the survivors of today need this Bill and they need you. They need you to.... They need you to.... They need you to.... They NEED you to.... They need YOU to.... They need you to join in support of this Bill. They need you to carry this Bill forward.

I will undoubtedly receive criticism from fellow survivors for saying "they need you." Survivors are a proud people, and they learn to *fiercely* fight for themselves in whatever way they can to survive.

But no survivor stands alone.

I didn't get here alone. I had my mother, a strong woman of faith who taught me to believe in hope. I had my Grandmother who taught me about courage. I had brother who taught me to trust again. I had a flock of therapists including Dee Marcotte and Jennifer Sandberg who taught me that vulnerability is not weakness, it is **unimaginable** strength. I have had amazing friends, Pat, Mark, Ed, Dave, Bill, Dan, Paul, Lon, Ellesondra, Tina, Nathan, Russell, Anna, Bukola, Suleman, Bella and so many others, who stood by me, in my lowest of lows - the greatest of which - my wife of 19 years and my best friend, Charine Chase.

And all along I have always had my God who loves me, who forgives me and who guides me to this very day, this very moment.

The Bill before you contains provisions that can provide the resources and pathways for children, for youth, for young persons, for adults to find their OWN pathways to their OWN goals - whether those goals are to graduate high school, or own their own company, to be an advocate, or to be a parent or mentor, or to be a lawyer or a judge or Congressperson or....to be a United States Ambassador.

With the aid **you** have the power to provide, their futures are limitless. The victims of trafficking need these protections and these provisions so they too may transition from victim to survivor to thriver. They do need you. We need you.

And I need you – I need you to look at our faces and not imagine strangers to whom you have no connection. I need you to imagine, as difficult as it may sound, imagine your own son, your own daughter, your own children needing this help and you saying yes, you helping a victim become so much more than what happened to them.

I shared with you that I was that first boy and what happened to me that day and the years thereafter.

Support this Bill, adopt this Bill, follow Congressman Smith's path to provide for survivors so that one day there can be the last girl, the last boy, the last child to come before Congress begging, begging for your help.

Every single one of you took this job for the exact same reason - to help others and to make a difference, the most noble of employs. And in the mix and mess of your daily duties and dilemmas you start to lose sight of your first purpose, your true calling.

Now, I know, no one will remember me, no one will remember this five minute speech. But I beg you to remember the story of the first boy. Because, history **will** remember YOU, history will remember if you made a difference, if you joined in support of the TVPA.

Here is your chance to re-embrace your true purpose. To make a difference. Make THIS difference - support **this** Bill. This is the way, back to your true purpose - to help others and to make a difference - this is your way.

I leave you with one more quote from someone else history will never forget,

"Work as if everything depends on you.

Pray as if everything depends on God."

- *St. Ignatius Loyola*

May you be blessed in all of your work, here, in these sacred halls for the Greater Good of All.

I thank you. May you be blessed.