

## How to Write Testimony for the Sex Trade Survivors Act

### ABOUT THE BILL

Led and introduced by survivor leaders based in Massachusetts, The Sex Trade Survivors Act (H.1597/S.983 “An Act to Strengthen Justice and Support for Sex Trade Survivors”) aims to increase agency, safety, and autonomy for survivors of the commercial sex industry. This bill:

- Ensures individuals who are bought and sold for sex will not be criminalized while continuing to hold those who do harm accountable — buyers and exploiters.
- Expunges past criminal charges of “prostitution,” “common nightwalking,” and “streetwalking.”
- Creates a statewide commission to prevent exploitation and increase access to survivor-led exit programming.

### DRAFTING TESTIMONY

When it comes to state legislation, anyone can submit public testimony! It is important for legislators to hear from stakeholders, constituents, and those most impacted by an issue to inform their stance on legislation. **This is where you come in → We need you to submit a written testimony IN SUPPORT of the Sex Trade Survivors Act so the committee understands the amount of support this policy solution has.** To submit written testimony, share with [ngallo@jri.org](mailto:ngallo@jri.org), who will bring the testimony to the committee.

Use this document to support your process of drafting testimony — feel free to utilize any templates (including the blank testimony template at the very end!). Remember: Brevity is your best friend!

#### **Part 1: HEADER**

Put the header and introduction seen below at the top of your document. This information will help committee staff immediately identify who you are, what bill you are testifying for, and what your position is. Follow the template below:

**JOINT COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY**  
**TESTIMONY OF [your name and/or organization here] IN SUPPORT OF**  
**H.1597 and S.983: An Act to strengthen justice and support for sex trade survivors**  
**May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

## **Part 2: Introduction & personal background**

Next, you'll want to greet the chairs of the committee. The Sex Trade Survivors Act has been referred to the Joint Committee on the Judiciary, and the legislators leading the committee include Chairs Eldridge and Day. In your introduction, you'll want to:

1. State the bill number and title
2. Share your stance on the bill
3. Introduce yourself personally and WHO you are (i.e., survivor, advocate, ally, member of the public, position at your organization, etc...).

Follow the template below:

Dear Chairman Eldridge, Chairman Day, and members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary, my name is [your name], and am pleased to offer testimony IN SUPPORT of ***H.1597 and S.983: An Act to strengthen justice and support for sex trade survivors***, also known as The Sex Trade Survivors Act.

As [advocate/ally/volunteer/position at organization], I offer this testimony in **support of *The Sex Trade Survivors Act***.

## **Part 3: State your professional and/or personal perspective**

Your testimony as a whole should have no more than 1-2 takeaways. What will make them sit up and listen closer? What will they take away with them? This section will be the body of your testimony and will relate your personal and/or professional perspective to your stance on the legislation. This will include two overarching themes (1) your perspective and/or lived experience and (2) how that connects to the community and state at large.

1. **Paragraph 1 → Your perspective and/or lived experience:** Share why you believe the components of this bill matter to you personally or professionally. You can take this moment to share your personal perspective, professional perspective, and/or lived experience.
  - a. Identify ~2 MAIN takeaways → How does this bill impact you as a survivor and/or person with lived experience, someone working with a frontline organization, someone who loves someone with lived experience, a young person, etc.?
2. **Paragraph 2 → Connect your view on the bill to your community and the state at large.** If you work with those directly impacted or support the efforts of people and organizations who do, you know how widespread commercial sexual exploitation is. If you are someone with a lived experience or a survivor, you know you are not alone. And if neither of those, as an advocate and ally,
  - b. Connect your view on the bill to your ~2 main takeaways. This is where you should talk about why this bill matters for Massachusetts. If you're part of a particular community that will be especially affected by this legislation, feel free to write about that.

- c. Include any statistics or key information in this section.

#### **Step 4: Closing call to action**

Use one or two sentences to restate the urgency of your stance on the legislation and to thank the committee for hearing your testimony. Once again ask legislators and the committee to report the bill favorably, referencing the bill name and number(s). Sign off and include your name and any relevant information. If you can, include your address! Follow the template below:

I implore you to act with urgency to end exploitation and address the roots of this issue in Massachusetts by voting ought to pass on **H.1597 & S.983: The Sex Trade Survivors Act**.  
Thank you.

**Sincerely,**

**[NAME]**

**[Address]**

***Please share final testimony with Nora Gallo - [ngallo@jri.org](mailto:ngallo@jri.org). Email Nora with any questions!***

**BLANK TESTIMONY TEMPLATE:**

**JOINT COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY**

**TESTIMONY OF [your name and/or organization here] IN SUPPORT OF H.1597 and S.983: An Act to strengthen justice and support for sex trade survivors**

***May 16th, 2023***

Dear Chairman Eldridge, Chairman Day, and members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary, my name is [your name], and am pleased to offer testimony IN SUPPORT of ***H.1597 and S.983: An Act to strengthen justice and support for sex trade survivors, also known as The Sex Trade Survivors Act.***

As [advocate/ally/volunteer/position at organization], I offer this testimony in support of ***The Sex Trade Survivors Act.***

[YOUR WRITTEN BODY PARAGRAPH(S)]

I implore you to act with urgency to end exploitation and address the roots of this issue in Massachusetts by voting ought to pass on **H.1597 & S.983: The Sex Trade Survivors Act.** Thank you.

Sincerely,

[NAME]

[Address]