

Nathan Walsh
Freeport

My name is Nate Walsh, and I am an Assistant District Attorney in Prosecutorial District III. I am the Human Trafficking prosecutor, and have been doing work in that area for several years. Law enforcement currently uses investigatory tools to help identify victims of human trafficking whose photographs have been posted in online prostitution advertisements on various adult websites across the Internet. Because of efforts to combat trafficking, popular websites have been shut down, such as Backpage. As a result, traffickers have spread out to many other websites. Photographs of victims are posted under aliases, and they are often posted in different cities and states. One of the tools we use utilizes facial recognition software to help identify the victims from their photographs posted online and to see what other websites contain the ads and photographs. Facial recognition is one part of the larger tool that we use to search and investigate online sex trafficking, which is known as Spotlight. I am afraid that the bill as currently written would prevent law enforcement from using spotlight and make investigating human trafficking offenses very, very difficult. Law enforcement needs to be able to utilize all resources available to fight human trafficking, and I ask that the victims of sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation be considered.