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I grew up in a dark and dysfunctional household. Sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and physical abuse were all a part of my childhood. I ran away multiple times only to be reunited with my Mother. At fifteen I had figured out the system enough to stay under the radar and not get caught. The system had failed me as a youth.

I caught a Greyhound to the "big city" determined to stay under the radar, and not get caught. I located an abandoned house that I would hid in for days. It was Winter I had no money or food, I was cold and hungry. I left walking and was offered a ride by a man he was a nice man, I made up a fake name and fake age and stated I was seeking work. He stated to me I was in luck he owned a business and was seeking to hire someone. I was offered a place to stay it was in a home more beautiful than I had ever seen there was food in the fridge, lovely beddings, and he was so nice. He of course was a grown man I was 15. He owned a business he sold roses in bars. I was given lovely clothes and makeup for the first time in my life. I had one of the first pair of brand new shoes I could ever remember in my whole life time. I was being groomed...

You see I would walk into bars - just honky tonk kind of places - in the beginning and ask men if they wanted to buy the woman they were with a flower. I would give all my funds to my boss return to his house where there was alcohol, and a variety of drugs to choose from. I had dabbled in drugs for me to get through the darkness I existed in with my family. I would take sleeping pills and drink to sleep my time away when I was home and not in school. It was my escape.

Weeks later this man, who had earned my trust complete, said I darn not share my secret of being a run away, sticking to the fake name I had made up. He never once was inappropriate to me. Again he was building my trust with him - he was a predator he was grooming me.

He had called me to the living area and said he had a gift for me. I opened the envelope and inside was a State ID card. It had my photo, it had the fake age I had given him when we had met, and it had the fake name I had given him. Now remember I was not with him when he made this - he knowingly made it and gave it to me as a "gift".

For me, I felt like Charlie in Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory. To me I had in my hands between my fingertips the "Golden Ticket" - the pass to never return to the nightmare of home ever.

That night I did not go to honky tonks. I was given a different basket of items: stuffed animals, flowers, and smell good stuff. I was taken to strip clubs I was told just show the ID when you go in. Always I was given a name of the person to ask for...I would show that person my ID then be allowed to enter, walk the floors, and ask the men to purchase items for the women on stage.

I made more money to give to the kind man that was caring for my physical needs...the man I thought was providing safety for me.

About two weeks after entering the strip clubs and always giving all the moneys to this man I felt I was safe. He was my friend and I trusted him. One day he took me to lunch at a local steak house - I ordered chopped steak with cheese sauce (you see when an event that changes your life forever happens, you can even remember the last meal you had before that event occurred). I was introduced to a man that day at lunch and my "friend" introduced him as his brother.

During that lunch an exchange of \$2500 dollars happened and my friend whom I trusted said, “Darling you’ll be going home with my brother here. He’ll give you a place to live, and a job too.” I said, “Well okay,” not knowing what was about to happen. We all walked to his car got my clothing from the trunk of the car, and I left with the man. As it turned out, the man owned two strip clubs. He took my fake ID and put me to work on a stage. I was given drugs, I was told who to be nice to, and I was told who to enter the “backrooms” with.

There was a bouncer – not for my safety, but to ensure I did not leave. If I sat with a guy or a guy wanted me to sit with them during the beginning, another girl always had to be present to listen to what I said. At the end of the night I was escorted to the owner’s house where often men were waiting for me and I was to preform sex acts sometimes with multiple men. I was degraded in the most indignant ways.

I was given drugs and they became the sole coping mechanism to carry me through. Often I would be expected to have sex with these men at night and still work open to close at the club. Sometimes I was denied food and sleep if I did not cooperate. I was never allowed access to a phone – even if I had access...who would I call?

This was the start to two decades in the life of human sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. I was a vulnerable girl in a club and the owners and bouncers did nothing to protect me - they just offered an environment for my demise.

We need laws to regulate an industry that makes a lot of money of the willing or not so willing exploitation of women and girls. I shared my story of how I was sold to the owner of a strip club because I want you to understand that this is the reality of what we see inside the Legalized Sex Industry. I was a vulnerable youth a runaway...trapped in a hell where regulations are few, and enforcement of regulations are pretty much rare outside a random sting operation.

Strip clubs provide an outlet to glamourize pornography and prostitution. Strip clubs often lead to substance abuse issues because clubs will charge clients more to sit down and drink with the girls. The owners of the clubs often provide drugs to the girls - and for most of us the drugs are the only tool that give us the courage to get on stage, or they are used to avoid the feelings of guilt and shame of some of the requests we were forced and/or coerced to fulfill. Often if you brought in the most money, you earned privileges...like being able to eat alone, or a few hours off. By being the top money maker you would be treated nicer by those “employing” you. This encouraged you to do and follow through the indignant requests - to allow for the things that aren’t supposed to go on in strip clubs - to happen, so you could have a break, some peace.

However there were times if you were the high money-maker, you would be expected to work more hours...if the customers were spending money on you, then you were in demand, thus the club owners would have more hours and the demands for sexual situations were higher because you were bringing in a higher revenue.

So in closing, I support the regulations set forth in SB 147. Of course, I would love to see strip clubs to be closed everywhere. I do understand that isn’t going to be a reality on this day. However, we can move forward with provisions to protect the women working inside these establishments and make it harder for illegal acts to happen in these establishments.

Thank you for your time today and allowing me to share my experiences with you.