

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1004

By Moody

A RESOLUTION to posthumously honor and commend Taylor Nicole Townsend for her efforts in the fight against human trafficking.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly are proud to pay tribute to those exemplary Tennesseans who work with purpose and conviction to improve the quality of life in their respective communities; and

WHEREAS, Taylor Nicole Townsend was one such individual, whose tireless devotion to the fight against human trafficking most certainly made an impact on the State of Tennessee and its citizens; and

WHEREAS, human trafficking is a scourge upon our State, as hundreds of juveniles are victimized each year in Tennessee, according to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI) and the Department of Children's Services' records; and

WHEREAS, Taylor Townsend was a juvenile sex trafficking survivor from West Tennessee; her trafficker was prosecuted and served a prison sentence for sex trafficking a minor in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, once free from trafficking, Ms. Townsend provided information to the TBI Special Agents in May 2015, including the meaning of code words, phrases, and messages used to commit the crime of human trafficking, as well as details regarding internet and web services utilized to facilitate online solicitation of children for the purpose of sex trafficking; and

WHEREAS, Taylor Townsend thanked TBI agents, saying, "thank you for being willing to rescue 'someone like me'"; and

WHEREAS, utilizing the critical information provided by Taylor Townsend, the TBI conducted fourteen covert operations code named "Someone Like Me" from June 2015 through

February 2018; the Bureau arrested 281 individuals for engaging in crimes associated with human trafficking and the illegal sex trade and recovered twenty-nine women and four juvenile survivors of human trafficking; and

WHEREAS, the Human Trafficking nonprofit Ancora Tennessee (formerly End Slavery Tennessee) started a podcast in 2019 called "Someone Like Me," and in episode number seven, Taylor "Nicole" Townsend is featured and tells her story, describing the origin of the phrase "Someone Like Me"; and

WHEREAS, Taylor Townsend was embraced by Middle Tennessee's human trafficking recovery community, Ancora Tennessee, Thistle Farms, and Rest Stop Ministries; however, trafficking can rob survivors of self-esteem and make them feel ostracized, and the tactics traffickers use to ensnare and manipulate victims, most commonly drug addiction, can have lasting effects; and

WHEREAS, Taylor Townsend lost her battle with trauma and addiction in 2024, but she leaves behind a tremendous legacy of courage, friendship, and kindness; and

WHEREAS, since 2013, a codified place on the statewide human trafficking council for a survivor leader has made a difference in the laws and policies the State has passed and has made Tennessee a national leader in the fight to end human trafficking in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee's efforts to serve, rescue, recover, and embrace survivors who embody "someone like me" will continue, and the TBI will continue to conduct covert operations to arrest individuals engaged in the crime of buying and selling women and children in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that we honor the memory of Taylor Townsend, whose strength and advocacy saved the lives of vulnerable Tennesseans and aided the TBI in its fight against human trafficking; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we posthumously commend Taylor Nicole Townsend for her courageous work in the fight against human trafficking, honoring her legacy and extending our gratitude to those individuals on the front lines who continue this important work.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.