

By Ashley Gold

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Sex trafficking survivor and advocate groups are asking to delay a House anti-online sex trafficking bill, citing changes to the bill revealed last week they say are harmful to sex trafficking victims.

The House Judiciary Committee is scheduled to mark up the bill, H.R. 1865 (115), sponsored by Rep. Ann Wagner, today.

Mary Mazzio, director of "I am Jane Doe," which follows two mothers of sex trafficking victims seeking legal action against Backpage.com, today asked the Judiciary Committee's top Democrat Rep. Jerry Nadler to push back the markup.

"This new amendment is harmful to the rights of victims," she wrote. "In the words of one Jane Doe attorney: 'This current amendment is worse than no bill at all for survivors.'"

Mazzio said the amendment allows for Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act to shield websites from civil liability and keeps victims from getting relief under the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act. She said the intent standard is much higher and harder to prove than the one in a similar Senate bill, the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act, S. 1693 (115), which has support from big tech players and victims and advocate groups.

"If this comes out of House Judiciary and it passes, this is likely the end of this whole exercise," Mazzio said in an interview, saying the survivor community feels "betrayed." She said the amendment seems to be largely pulled from language suggested by NetChoice, a trade association whose members include Google and Facebook. "How did that left turn happen? Why was it done in secret?"