

Bill: 1st substitute HB 66 – Ritual Abuse Modifications

Sponsor: Representative Ken Ivory

Floor Sponsor: Senator Jen Plumb

UASD Position: Support

This Bill addresses ritual abuse.

Discussion: The Bill mandates that current sexual assault and sexual abuse training for law enforcement officers include instruction on sexual assault committed during a ritual, as well as the impact such conduct has on the victim. It also establishes an aggravating factor for certain offenses committed against individuals under the age of 18 if the offense is part of a ritual. The Bill includes a coordination clause to align with S.B. 24, the Child Abuse and Torture Amendments, by incorporating the newly created crime of child torture—defined in S.B. 24—into the list of offenses that qualify for the aggravating factor introduced by this Bill. Representative Ivory emphasized the need for ritual abuse of children to be recognized as an aggravating factor at sentencing, stating that this type of abuse effectively "murders their soul".

Multiple adults shared personal accounts of the ritual abuse they endured as children and the lasting impact it has had on their lives. Liz Klc, Policy Director for the Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice ("UCCJJ"), testified in support of the Bill. Marlesse Jones, Director of the Victim Services Commission ("VSC"), also testified in support of the Bill. Heather Anderson, representing the Unified Police Department ("UPD"), spoke in favor of the Bill and highlighted the importance of law enforcement officers being trained in trauma-informed questioning to assist survivors of this type of abuse.

Yeas: 6

Nays: 0

N/V: 3

Outcome: 1st substitute HB 66 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.