



January 2026

PATH EDUCATION

Kentucky House Bill 4 (HB 4), introduced for the 2026 Regular Session, aims to criminalize the "grooming" of minors, closing a legal gap that currently requires law enforcement to wait for solicitation or assault to occur before intervening. The bill, introduced by Rep. Marianne Proctor (R), targets the manipulative process predators use to build trust with children for future sexual acts.

Key Provisions of HB 4

- **Definition of Grooming:** Defines grooming as a pattern of behavior aimed at building an emotional connection with a minor through manipulation and trust-building, with the intent to facilitate future sexual acts or normalize sexual conduct, occurring either online or in person.
- **Penalties:** Penalties are tiered based on the age of the victim and the perpetrator's role:
 - **Adults (18+) and victims under 14: Class A misdemeanor.**
 - **Adults (18+) and victims under 12: Class D felony.**
 - **Trusted Authority Figures (Teachers/Coaches) and victims under 18: Class D felony.**
 - **Trusted Authority Figures (Teachers/Coaches) and victims under 12: Class C felony.**
- **Targeted Prevention:** The bill is designed to allow earlier intervention by law enforcement before physical abuse or solicitation takes place.
- **Exceptions:** The bill clarifies that lawful, non-predatory communication, such as education on human sexuality, healthcare, or child protection, is not considered grooming.

Current Status

As of late January 2026, the bill has received a 14-0 vote from the House Judiciary Committee and is moving toward consideration by the full House. House Speaker David Osborne has indicated the bill is a priority for the session.

If passed, Kentucky would become one of several states, similar to Ohio, with specific laws criminalizing the grooming of minors.

Want to keep track of what's happening in Frankfort from now till March 28th's end of session? Check out the links below courtesy of Senator Cassie Chambers Armstrong's office.

[Kentucky General Assembly Home Page](#)

[Daily Legislative Calendar](#)

[2026 Session Calendar and Standing Committee Schedule](#)

PATH IN THE FIELD

PATH was honored to be invited to facilitate a presentation and discussion for the Central Kentucky Human Trafficking Task Force during *Human Trafficking Prevention Month*. This coalition of service providers, faith leaders, law enforcement representatives, survivors, advocates, and child welfare professionals met in Elizabethtown on January 15th, 2026 for a networking and work meeting. Jaime Thompson spoke to the group about their goal to create a more comprehensive resource guide for their region and the victim-centered approaches task forces like this one are prioritizing. The group of over 30 members participated in a discussion with Jaime connected to human trafficking victims and survivors' needs and the current strengths and gaps in the state of Kentucky to adequately meet these needs for both minor and adult victims.

JANUARY
**HUMAN
TRAFFICKING
PREVENTION
MONTH**



PATH IN THE BOARDROOM

PATH welcomed 3 new board members at the end of 2025 and they have jumped right in to our educational work.



Dr. Ruben Pavlov, PhD, LCADC, CSW is a Licensed Clinical Alcohol and Drug Counselor (LCADC) in Kentucky and has a working relationship with the Louisville Metro Department of Corrections (LMDC). Dr. Pavlov recently conducted Human Trafficking 101 training as part of monthly education required for LMDC employees. He also presented to the current academy class of soon to be LMDC employees.

Bonnie Wheeler is using her connections to introduce PATH to other organizations who share similar missions. Bonnie is part of a planning team for Girls United, a local non-profit mentoring program offered through the Hardin County Schools. Bonnie and several PATH board members attended a Relaunch Party for Girls United in November. Bonnie believes the awareness and advocacy we share through PATH directly align with Girls United's mission to empower young women through mentorship, leadership and confidence-building programs.

PATH AND YOU



The beginning of a new year is a great time to get organized and do all those little things we planned on doing at the end of last year. Maybe one of those items was signing up for Kroger Community Rewards and making PATH your beneficiary.

Follow instructions here: [Kroger Community Rewards Instructions](#)

or

Sign in to your account at kroger.com, go to My Account, Select Community Rewards from the left hand menu, search for PATH Coalition of KY, click Enroll.

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PATH Coalition of Kentucky | [Website](#)

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