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Good afternoon, Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for raising Senate Bill 153 - An Act Concerning the Interagency Task Force on Trafficking in Persons and Senate Bill 154 - An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Interagency Task Force on Trafficking in Persons. I am here in support of these very important bills which address a human rights issue.

In the 2004 legislative session your committee acted upon a bill that established an Interagency Task Force on Trafficking in Persons. Since then I have been working with the members of the task force to provide a comprehensive document that can serve as the basis for the legislation before you. All the members, from law enforcement to service providers agree that the recommended legislation is necessary.

I want to thank all the members of the taskforce, many whom are here today, for all their hard work and dedication in writing the report that is the outcome of PA. 04-8. This taskforce was a true collaboration of people, and ideas and a shared mission of making the lives of trafficking victims hopeful.

I want to thank the Permanent Commission on the Status Women for all their hard work coordinating the details of the task force. Their role was invaluable to completing our task.

The study makes the following recommendations:

1. Enact a state-level anti-trafficking statute
2. Increase public awareness
3. Provide funding for service providers who assist victims
4. Train law enforcement and social service providers
5. Collect data and establish an analysis system
6. Establish an on going Interagency Task Force on Trafficking in Persons.

The State of Connecticut has an opportunity of becoming the 13th state to adopt a criminal statute on trafficking of human beings. This is proactive legislation that will be helpful to law enforcement and most importantly for the victims who have been trafficked to this state. It is believed that people have been trafficked here, but we need this legislation to address this human rights issue.

Young women and children are being brought to this state under false pretenses, living in slave like conditions, being mistreated and living with the fear of retribution to them and their families. This is a heinous crime.

By continuing the work of the taskforce, we will have the opportunity to include representation of the Judicial branch, the Office of Victim Advocate, and Court Support Services Division to help put services in place. It was clear, as we worked on this issue that their insight is needed.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to continue to work with all of you on this most important legislation. We all have an opportunity to make difference in people's lives.