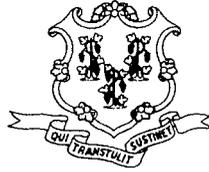


**State of Connecticut**  
**GENERAL ASSEMBLY**



**COMMISSION ON CHILDREN**

**Testimony of**  
**Elaine Zimmerman**  
**Executive Director**  
**Connecticut Commission on Children**

**Judiciary Committee**  
**Public Hearing**  
**February 24, 2006**

Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on behalf of the Connecticut Commission on Children concerning Raised Bills 153 and 154 which seek to prevent human trafficking in our state.

The Interagency Task Force on Trafficking in Persons was established by law in 2004 to study the problem of human trafficking in Connecticut.

The Task Force utilized information from the 2005 Trafficking in Persons Report, written by the U.S. State Department, that estimated that between 14,500 and 17,500 people are trafficked into the United States each year. Half of these victims are children that ultimately are forced into prostitution each year.

The Task Force determined that much of the trafficking that occurs in Connecticut is due to its geographic location and the availability of two major highways (Interstate 84 and Interstate 95) that run between Boston and New York City, and the access to major international airports and marine ports.

There are many psychological effects that stem from the sexual abuse children suffer as a result of trafficking and as you can well imagine their experience causes severe problems later in life. We know that children who are sexually abused become unable to trust adults and they do not have faith that adults will help them. Some sexually abused girls become prostitutes later in life, because they may feel the need to act out the feelings regarding what happened to them as children. Children who have been sexually abused are more likely to become homeless later in life.

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These children can also become depressed and suicidal. Runaway children are most likely to be picked up and used in trafficking. This leads to homelessness, prostitution, anxiety, depression, lack of trust, as well as several other psychological problems.

It is disturbing and somewhat surprising to think that human trafficking still occurs in the United States, and that it happens in Connecticut. Something needs to be done to stop it. Too many children are victims of this crime and Raised Bills 153 and 154 help to set up a process for addressing trafficking in our state.

There is no statute defining or criminalizing human trafficking in the state of Connecticut. R.B. 154 makes trafficking illegal, thus making Connecticut less attractive to traffickers. This would be due, in part, to a better understanding of human trafficking from Connecticut law enforcement and victims' services groups. R.B. 153 continues the important work of the Task Force to evaluate the state's progress in preventing human trafficking.

Within the past several years, many states have passed, or currently have before their legislature, bills prohibiting human trafficking which establish criminal penalties for those who have been found guilty of human trafficking. R.B. 154 would support the federal anti-trafficking law that can be used for federal prosecution in the state.

Therefore, we support this legislation in the protection of children and prevention of more children becoming victims of human traffickers. Human trafficking is a threat to children's well-being and safety. Children need to be protected from being used in forced labor and forced prostitution.

Thank you for this opportunity to present the views of the Commission on Children on these important child safety bills, which address both prevention and assisting those who are held by human traffickers. We look forward to working with the Committee to ensure that every child in Connecticut has a safe and secure life.