

**Testimony before the Committee on Judiciary on Committee Bill No. 398: An Act
Establishing A Trafficking In Persons Council**

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Thank you Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, and members of the Committee on Judiciary. My name is Renee Redman. I am the Legal Director of the ACLU of Connecticut, and a member of the Interagency Task Force on Trafficking in Persons.

The ACLU of Connecticut supports Committee Bill No. 398. Trafficking in persons or “human trafficking” is a form of slavery. Traffickers force individuals to engage in prostitution or other labor through physical force, threats, coercion and deception. They prey on individuals who are poor, unemployed or underemployed and who lack social safety nets. Victims do not have to be foreigners. However, many victims are lured to Connecticut with false promises of jobs and better lives, only to be forced to work under brutal and inhuman conditions. Victims are found in prostitution, sex entertainment, domestic work, agriculture and sweatshops. They are men, women and children.

Trafficking victims are often difficult to identify. They frequently do not recognize that they are victims and almost never declare themselves as victims to the police, their lawyers or even social service personnel. They have usually been threatened with abandonment, physical harm, deportation, and/or arrest by the police. They often do not speak English and come from places where the police do not assist victims and, in fact, are often participants in the trafficking.

Thus, public awareness and outreach are critical parts of an over-all strategy to identify and assist trafficking victims. All professionals who may have direct contact with victims must be trained to identify victims. In addition, trafficking victims need services, often on an emergency basis. Services include translation, medical, housing and legal. Provision of services requires coordination among various agencies both governmental and non-governmental.

Collaboration between enforcement, governmental and non-governmental agencies is necessary to effectively combat trafficking. The collaboration that began pursuant to the work of the Interagency Task Force on Trafficking in Persons should continue and grow. To that end we support the establishment of a Trafficking in Persons Council that will continue this work. It would provide a forum for updates and progress reports on the enforcement of the state anti-trafficking statute, develop mechanisms to ensure that victims are provided adequate services and representation in legal matters, identify needs and services of children of trafficking victims, and continue discussions regarding whether certain conduct of victims of trafficking should be criminalized.