

*Catherine R. Costa
25 Rosemary Lane
South Windsor, CT 06074
860 644 8094
glvq793377erix@cox.net*

Select Committee on Children
Room 011, Capitol Building
Hartford, CT 06106
860-240-0370

Dear Members of the Select Committee on Children,

Please vote in favor of SB 153 to create a "safe harbor" program for child victims of prostitution, in Connecticut. This program would create a presumption that any minor child who is arrested and charged with prostitution is a victim of trafficking in persons and not subject to criminal penalties. Members, of the Select Committee on Children, according to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the average age of entry into prostitution is, ages 11-14, in the U.S. Those children should be considered victims and not criminals.

Furthermore, the bill would provide much needed social services to these victimized children, including safe and secure housing, crisis intervention, and other community-based programs as needed. Last session, Senator Kane submitted SB 76 concerning this same issue.

These children are truly victims of commercial sexual exploitation and they need our support. The traffickers of that exploitation submit these victimized children to brutality. Prosecuting and sending these underage children (17 and under) to jail continues to tragically brutalize them. It doesn't make sense legally or humanely to give these children a criminal record. These kids are underage. They were the victims in this human trafficking, for goodness sake.

We should, instead, provide them with a safe place to live and counselors to teach them how to live. We should restore their dignity, which was stolen from them, and we should empower them, by teaching them how to make good, safe decisions for THEMSELVES.

Members, of the Select Committee on Children, please help these exploited children.

Thank you.

Mrs Cathy Costa

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mrs Cathy Costa". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.