

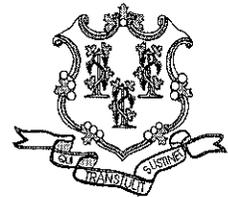


STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Public Hearing Testimony

Judiciary Committee

April 15, 2013



S.B. No. 1158 AN ACT CONCERNING VICTIMS OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING
and
H.B. No. 6696 AN ACT CONCERNING ENHANCED STATE EFFORTS TO PREVENT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) **supports** S.B. No. 1158, An Act Concerning Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking and H.B. No. 6696 An Act Concerning Enhanced State Efforts to Prevent Human Trafficking.

Taken together, these bills provide a comprehensive response to address the issue of sexual exploitation and human trafficking on a number of key levels. Specifically, S.B. 1158: (1) amends existing statutory provisions that provide for the inventory, seizure and forfeiture of criminal assets to include assets derived from commercial sexual exploitation of a minor; (2) requires the Office of the Chief Court Administrator to develop a bilingual notice concerning resources for victims of human trafficking; (3) requires certain liquor permit premises and truck stops to display such notice in a conspicuous location; and (4) requires the Office of Victim Services to analyze the compensation and services provided to victims of human trafficking and make recommendations regarding statutory changes that may be enacted to address the needs of such victims. H.B. No. 6696: (1) revises the statutory criteria relating to the criminal offense of trafficking in persons, (2) increases criminal penalties for persons who patronize a prostitute who is under eighteen years of age or a victim of human trafficking, (3) allows the Superior Court to vacate criminal convictions for prostitution involving victims of human trafficking, and (4) establishes a task force that will study the implementation of state initiatives designed to reduce and prevent human trafficking.

Last year, an organization called Shared Hope International issued a report card regarding human trafficking laws in all fifty states. Unfortunately, in this evaluation Connecticut's trafficking laws received a grade of "F."¹ Many elements of these two pieces of legislation address several of the key points of emphasis contained in the Shared Hope International evaluation, specifically: the criminalization of domestic minor sex trafficking; criminal penalties addressing demand; criminal provisions for traffickers; protective provisions for the child victims; and criminal justice tools for investigation and prosecution. This bill also mirrors several important federal criminal statutes.

DCF believes that increasing awareness of the issue of human trafficking and strengthening penalties for perpetrators is critical to protecting the victims in our state each year. Over the past two years, the Department has been collaborating with local, state and federal law enforcement to better coordinate our response, particularly as it relates to children from our child welfare system.

As we noted in our testimony on April 5th regarding H.B. No. 5666, DCF has seen a dramatic increase of trafficking of minors in Connecticut over the past several years. In response, DCF has increasingly

¹ Shared Hope International, "Protected Innocence Challenge 2012 Report Cards", <http://sharedhope.org/what-we-do/bring-justice/reportcards/report-cards/>

sharpened its focus on the growing issue of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking afflicting children involved with the child welfare system. Human Trafficking is the third most profitable criminal industry in the world, generating an estimated \$32 billion per year.² Most simply, Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking constitutes modern day slavery. The reaction of moral outrage that is prompted in the face of such child victimization has fueled considerable work here at the Department to galvanize a systemwide collaborative effort to combat it.

While much attention has been paid to this human rights violation in other countries, including Cambodia and Thailand, it is perhaps less widely understood that child trafficking is occurring in the United States at an alarming rate. The United States Department of Justice estimates that 200,000 American children are potentially trafficked each year into the sex trade. The United States Department of State "Trafficking in Persons Report 2010" found that the majority of domestic victims enslaved in the sex industry are runaway and homeless youth. Nationally, 450,000 children run away from home each year. One of every three teens on the street will be lured toward prostitution within 48 hours of leaving home. This means at least 150,000 children are lured into prostitution each year. The average age of children victimized by pornography and prostitution in the United States is 12 years old.³ Data shows that children who are involved with child welfare services and in the foster care system are at a much higher risk to be recruited into the sex industry and prostitution.

DCF has been and remains committed to addressing the issue of trafficking within our borders. Since 2008, when collaborative efforts in Connecticut significantly increased -- both internally at DCF and externally with the community -- there have been approximately 100 children who have been identified and confirmed as victims of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking. Of the victims identified, **ninety-eight percent** have been involved with child welfare services in some manner. Many of these children have been victimized while in foster care or congregate care. Connecticut DCF has put forth tremendous efforts to end the sale of our children. These efforts fall within three main categories: Identification and Response; Awareness and Education; and Restore and Recovery.

We urge your support for both of these bills.

² ILO, *A global alliance against forced labor: 2005*.

³ *National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Throwaway Children/NISMART-2*.