

Testimony to the Judiciary Committee  
April 14, 2013  
In SUPPORT of HB 6696 AAC ENHANCED STATE EFFORTS  
TO PREVENT HUMAN TRAFFICKING  
by Patricia Shea

According to the Polaris Project, Human trafficking is one of the fastest growing criminal businesses in the world, and one of the most profitable. Traffickers prey on the most vulnerable victims including children, both US citizens and foreign nationals, who they will exploit in labor or commercial sex. The victims face a life of beatings, rape, confinement and/or psychological torture.

Traffickers make over \$32 billion in profits each year world-wide. In the U.S., sex traffickers accrue more than \$500,000 a year, through the sexual exploitation of just three victims.

More information from the Polaris Project can be found here:  
<http://www.polarisproject.org/human-trafficking/overview>

Most of us don't see it or know it exists, but sex trafficking is a harsh reality in Connecticut. The victims are Connecticut children. They suffer unspeakable cruelty and degradation.

HB 6696 is needed to give victims a second chance and to enable prosecution of the pimps under Connecticut law.

- Section 1 of the bill would bring Connecticut's human trafficking penal code in line with the Federal Law (under which Dennis Paris was prosecuted and convicted in 2008) and the United Nations Model law by including *threat or use of force* as an element of the crime of trafficking in persons.
- Further, we should be protecting victims rather than charging them. Section 1 seeks to remove the requirement that the victim be convicted of prostitution in order to charge the

pimp with trafficking. This is the right thing to do. They are children, not criminals.

- Section 3, would give the victims of sex trafficking, the ability to have their prostitution charges or convictions vacated by the court. Victims of sex trafficking who have escaped this horrible part of their lives will be able to have a “second chance” and make a fresh start. Connecticut should join the 7 states, including New York and Vermont, which have already enacted such “Second Chance” laws.
- Some of the girls who are being victimized as young as 12 years old. There are Johns who believe the younger the better. There are Escort ads on craigslist or backpage.com that use descriptions of young girls to attract Johns. Johns will pay more money for a younger girl. A violation of these girls (or boys) should give rise to more than a misdemeanor. Section 2 of the bill would make patronizing a minor or a victim of human trafficking a class B felony. This is a positive step that should be adopted. One suggested change to this section is to add OR SHOULD HAVE KNOWN after “knowing” in lines 23 and 25.
- In order to continue the fight against human trafficking in Connecticut, interested parties with important perspectives to share should come together to look at what else can be done to eradicate human trafficking. Section 4 creates a one-year task force with such a mission. There is currently a Trafficking in Persons Council within the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. However, it does not appear that the Council has been meeting and PCSW asked for a bill to eliminate the requirement that the Council must meet 3 times per year. (See SB 834) A new, invigorated, task force needs to be constituted.

For all the above reasons, please pass HB 6696.