

**Testimony of Raymond Bechard**  
**Connecticut General Assembly**  
**Joint Committee On Children**  
**March 5, 2013**

Good Afternoon, Chairman Bartolomeo, Chairman Urban, and Committee members.

My name is Raymond Bechard. I am the author of the books “The Berlin Turnpike: A True Story of Human Trafficking in America,” and Unspeakable: The Hidden Truth Behind The World’s Fastest Growing Crime,” which is an expose of Child Trafficking in all its forms around the world.

I’m here to urge your passage of Bill 6500, AN ACT PROHIBITING THE PUBLICATION OF ADVERTISEMENTS FOR COMMERCIAL SEXUAL ACTS THAT DEPICT A MINOR.

This bill is a strong and effective improvement over a bill which became law last year, Public Act No. 12-141, AN ACT CONCERNING COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF A MINOR.

I’ll start by telling you how the research for The Berlin Turnpike relates to my testimony. It tells the story of a landmark federal trial which took place here in Hartford in 2007. The case of United States vs. Dennis Paris provides a rare and detailed account of how a specific type of human trafficking – called *commercial sexual exploitation* - is thriving because it has left the street corners and entered our homes. This one case contains every element of a crime so reliant on secrecy; shrouded behind a scintillating veil of growing legitimacy. Yet it is buried just below the surface of our culture’s mainstream perception.

The myth is that human trafficking of this kind disguises itself as a different monster; an evil face that is easy to recognize. The truth is far more devious and complex. In the shadows of our daily lives, this silent explosion of crime and abuse hides behind a deceptive mask of false innocence and legitimacy

Among other crimes, Dennis Paris was convicted of “sex trafficking of a minor,” and is now serving a thirty year sentence in federal prison. One of the girls he victimized, through what he called an “Escort” service, was only sixteen years old. Another of his victims, again sold to men in and around Hartford through his “Escort” service, was just fourteen.

During his trial these girls courageously testified to the abuse, drug use, violence, degradation and life-long wounds they suffered at the hands of Dennis Paris and the “Escort” business he ran throughout Connecticut for years.

Along with the stories of these young girls, Federal Prosecutor's also revealed the truth about the *Hartford Advocate's* "escort" advertisements. The *Advocate*, which is owned by the Tribune Company's *Hartford Courant*, was cited over 60 times during the trial as Paris's exclusive channel for selling his girls. The *Advocate's* "escort" section was the only thing Dennis Paris needed to find men willing to pay him money to have sex with his victims.

Yet five and a half years after the trial in which the Department of Justice proved that the *Advocate's* "escort" advertisements often featured the commercial sexual exploitation of minors, the paper continued running dozens of these advertisements every week.

The good news is that one month after AN ACT CONCERNING COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF A MINOR became law in Connecticut, the *Hartford Advocate* permanently removed all escort, massage, and spa advertising from the notorious back pages of their publication. In short, last year's legislation worked, but only in this one instance.

While an important victory, this is only the beginning of our fight to protect children from this crime.

A little more than one year ago, Jaykuan Paris, Dennis Paris's brother, was also arrested in Connecticut for "promoting prostitution." With his brother serving time in an Arizona penitentiary for human trafficking crimes, State and Federal law enforcement had been investigating Jaykuan for the very same crimes for at least two years.

According to the 35-page arrest warrant, Jaykuan Paris was also a pimp for several young women in Connecticut. The girls under his control told police that Jaykuan would beat them if they received "bad reviews" on "escort" service websites. The users of these sites, often men who refer to themselves as "hobbyists," readily "chat" about the girls whose sexual services they have paid for.

And like his brother Dennis, Jaykuan did not operate his business alone. He had a partner: his wife, Pearl Kelly-Paris, a Connecticut State Trooper.

On at least one occasion, Pearl met her pimp-husband at a motel in Rocky Hill – driving her State Police cruiser – and handed him a digital camera. He then proceeded to photograph two of "his girls" along with his wife – the Trooper – to post in online "escort" listings. All three women, including the State Trooper, wore black lingerie and face masks for the photographs. The online "escort" ads would then generate calls from men looking to pay for sex.

By far the most popular of these websites is Backpage.com, an enormous listing of otherwise legitimate classified advertisements owned by Village Voice Media. An example from today's Connecticut "Escort" edition, reads: "Hey guys im looking to spend some time with a discreat man so give me a call ill be doing incalls & outcalls iam a very open minded and free sprited young lady. \$100." Another reads, "Hello fellas, it's Jessica and if your looking for some company with a sexy young lady that knows just what you need here i am. I offer a unrushed session that will cater to all your needs and desires and a experience that you will love."

Backpage.com began running online "escort" ads in Connecticut in November, 2011. Recently, *New York Times*, columnist Nicholas Kristoff wrote that, "Backpage accounts for about 70 percent of prostitution advertising ads in the United States, earning more than \$22 million annually from" the ads.

Further, a magazine called *Extreme New England* lists advertisements for "escort" services in several northeastern states and New York. It also features "want" ads which continually look for new recruits for these organizations. The magazine is published in Kensington, Connecticut.

Let me be clear, this new legislation would make all those involved criminally liable for running "escort" advertisements from anyone using minors for paid sex. To prevent going to jail, anyone taking money for these ads would have to verify the age of everyone employed by the "escort" agencies.

Right now you have the opportunity to seriously address sex trafficking in Connecticut by passing H.B. 6500. The law will make publishers "guilty of commercial sexual exploitation of a minor" if they run "escort" ads involving anyone under the age of 18. The law is aimed directly at "escort" advertisements like those available right now in the Kensington based *Extreme New England* Magazine, and on websites like Backpage.com.

These "escort" agencies have proven to be nothing but a front for those who are often guilty of the commercial exploitation of minors and young adults.

I know much of this information may be new. Certainly, this is a complex issue. But I urge you to strongly consider passing this important legislation. It will protect the future of countless young people in Connecticut by reducing the demand from all those who seek to destroy their lives.

Thank you.