



Testimony of the Connecticut Children's Alliance  
**IN SUPPORT OF**  
**HB 6849, An Act Strengthening Protections for Victims of Human Trafficking**

Testimony of Krystal Rich, Director  
Judiciary Committee  
March 30, 2015

Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Krystal Rich and I am the Director of the Connecticut Children's Alliance (CCA). CCA is the state-wide membership organization of Connecticut's nine child advocacy centers and seventeen multidisciplinary teams. We are dedicated to the enhancement of a timely and comprehensive multidisciplinary response to child abuse victims and their families. Connecticut Children's Alliance strongly supports HB 6849, An Act Strengthening Protections for Victims of Human Trafficking.

In 2014 in response to updates in the law, the seventeen multidisciplinary teams received training from the Department of Children and Families on how to identify and respond to victims of domestic minor sex trafficking. Since these trainings, the teams have received an increase in cases and have found, due to our current laws, there are still many barriers to providing victims and/or survivors with an effective and efficient response. According to Shared Hope International, an organization whose mission is to eradicate human trafficking, Connecticut's laws are currently lacking in the areas of criminalization for demand, protective provisions for child victims and tools for investigation.<sup>1</sup> The additions outlined in HB 6849 will bring our laws closer to where they need to be in order to appropriately address the complexity of domestic minor sex trafficking.

Like any victim of abuse, children who have been trafficked deserve resources and protection rather than blame for what happened to them. Victims of domestic minor sex trafficking and sexual exploitation are often caused to commit crimes as a result of being trafficked and under the current law; they may still face consequences for such crimes. Rather than blame a child and

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<sup>1</sup> Shared Hope International, Connecticut Report Card (2014).

label them as a deviant or juvenile delinquent for the abuse they endured, we need to instead expunge any criminal records related to the trafficking immediately as outline in section three of this bill. The consequences for the trafficking need to be placed on those responsible which should be expanded to include those who have knowingly assisted, enabled, or financially benefited from domestic minor sex trafficking. These additions outlined in section four are critical as too often buyers of commercial sex acts with children are not prosecuted, despite the significant role they play in the continuation of these crimes.

Aside from ensuring those who commit these crimes are held responsible and the children are viewed as victims and/or survivors through the eyes of our law, we need to secure the proper services. The healing process is one that takes time and financial resources which is why we strongly support the provisions outlined in sections one and six. These provisions will expand the services currently provided by the Department of Public Health as well as ensure access to financial assistance by allowing an exception to certain ineligibility criteria for the state crime victims' compensation. Allowing DMST survivors to access compensation will not only assist them in rebuilding their lives but acknowledges that they were victims of a crime.

In closing, we would like to thank the Co-Chairs and distinguished members of this Committee for their time. On behalf of these children and the many more whose stories go untold, we urge you to take action to protect the victims of this devastating and prevalent crime. Please join us in supporting HB 6849 which will take us one step closer to providing children the protections they deserve.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like additional information.

Krystal Rich, Director  
Connecticut Children's Alliance (CCA)  
75 Charter Oak Avenue, Suite 1-309  
Hartford, CT 06106  
[ctchildrensalliance@gmail.com](mailto:ctchildrensalliance@gmail.com)  
860-670-9447