

COMMISSION OFFICERS
Antonia Moran, *Chair*
Mary Lee A. Kiernan, *Vice Chair*
Lucia A. Aschettino, *Secretary*
Catherine Ernsky, *Treasurer*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Carolyn M. Treiss



COMMISSIONERS
Maritza Bond
JoAnn Calnen
April Capone
Susan Eastwood
Karen Jarmoc
Jennifer Just
Kristin A. LaFleur
Holly Masi
Hilda C. Nieves
Melanie O'Brien
Helene Shay
Susan Toliver
Patricia E.M. Whitcombe

HONORARY MEMBERS
Barbara DeBaptiste
Connie Dice
Patricia T. Hendel
Patricia Russo

**Testimony of
The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Before the
Judiciary Committee
March 30, 2015**

Re: H.B. 6849, An Act Strengthening Protections for Victims of Human Trafficking

Senators Coleman and Kissel, Representatives Tong and Rebimbas, and distinguished members of the Judiciary committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) in support of **H.B. 6849, An Act Strengthening Protections for Victims of Human Trafficking**.

In 2013, the National Human Trafficking Resource Center received 128 human trafficking related calls from Connecticut, which constitutes the 35th highest call volume of all 50 states and Washington DC.¹ And, Connecticut's Department of Children and Families recorded 94 cases of domestic minor sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children in 2014.²

Connecticut's Trafficking in Persons Council (Council) is chaired and convened by the PCSW pursuant to C.G.S. 46a-170. The Council consults with government and non-government organizations to develop recommendations to strengthen state and local efforts to prevent trafficking, protect and assist victims, and prosecute traffickers; identified criteria for providing services to adult trafficking victims and their children; and provides updates and progress reports on trafficking prevention efforts and victim assistance. The Council submits an annual report and recommendations to the Connecticut General Assembly utilizing the United States Department of State's "4P" paradigm--prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnership.³

The PCSW supports all of the changes proposed in H.B. 6849, many of which are based on the Protected Innocence Legislative Framework, an analysis of state laws performed by the American Center for Law & Justice and Shared Hope International.⁴ These proposed changes will help make Connecticut laws stronger, ideally reducing the incidence of trafficking in persons and increasing the risk to buyers and traffickers. Two of the proposals in H.B. 6849 were also included in the Trafficking in Persons Council 2014 Annual Report.⁵ Section 4

¹ National Human Trafficking Resource Center. Data Breakdown, Connecticut State Report, 2013.

² Connecticut Department of Children and Families. Human Anti-Trafficking Response Team, 2015.

³ U.S. Department of State, Four "Ps": Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Partnerships. <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/4p/index.htm>

⁴ Shared Hope International. Protected Innocence Challenge, 2014.

⁵ Trafficking in Persons Council 2014 Annual Report. December 2014.

of the bill proposes to eliminate the requirement of proving use of force or threat of use of force, fraud, or coercion in the sex trafficking of a minor under the age of 18. In situations involving minors, evidence of force, coercion or fraud should not be applied. Section 5 of H.B. 6849 seeks to promote law enforcement efforts, also a 2014 recommendation of the Council, by authorizing wire tapping for certain crimes related to trafficking

Additionally, H.B. 6849 proposes to expand service currently offered by the Department of Public Health to victims of trafficking in persons and other commercial sexual exploitation of children acts; expand membership of the Trafficking in Persons Council to include public members who work with child victims of commercial sexual exploitation and child trafficking victims; permit a minor who has incurred a criminal record as a result of being trafficked to expunge the records immediately or, at the latest, upon turning 18 years of age; and makes an exception for commercially sexually exploited minors under the age of 18 to be able to apply and be awarded victim compensation.

On behalf of the 26 members of the Trafficking in Persons Council, the PCSW urges your support of H.B. 6849. Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.