

Center for Youth Leadership

Why wait for someone else to make a difference?

**Connecticut Legislature
Judiciary Committee
Testimony in Support of HB 5623:
*An Act Concerning Violence Against Women and
Victims of Human Trafficking*
March 12, 2016**

On behalf of the 155 members of the Center for Youth Leadership at Brien McMahon High School in Norwalk, we are writing in support of *HB 5623, An Act Concerning Violence Against Women and Victims of Human Trafficking*.

The Center for Youth Leadership, which is the largest youth activism organization in the state, addresses several social issues, including human trafficking. We have done so since 2006. The purpose of our work is to educate the general public about human trafficking in the United States, with an emphasis on Connecticut. We lead two-three outreach activities a month in schools, on street corners and at rest areas on I-95 and other state highways. Our work is done during the school day, in the evening and on weekends. We have outlined our work at meetings and workshops hosted by the Department of Children and Families; the Trafficking in Persons Council at the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women; Grace Farms in New Canaan; and several schools in the state.

We support the following elements of HB 5623:

1. Lines 819 to 822: The expansion of the Trafficking in Persons Council to include the Commissioner of Consumer Protection and the Basic Training Division of the Police Officers Training and Standards Council.

2. Lines 855 to 860: The Trafficking in Persons Council at the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women shall coordinate the collection, analysis and dissemination of data regarding human trafficking, and consult with governmental and nongovernmental organizations.

3. Lines 875 to 899: A few weeks ago we wrote to Senator Bob Duff, Representative William Tong, Representative Diana Urban and Representative Caroline Simmons to express our concern about the lack of prosecutions and convictions of human trafficking cases, especially given the number of teens who have been identified by the Department of Children and Families as victims of trafficking. We believe an accounting of the actions of each state's attorney office and municipal police department will help governmental and nongovernment agencies plan and implement outreach efforts and deliver services to victims of trafficking.

4. **Lines 916 to 927:** Given the number of hospitality employees we have come across in our work that do not know how to identify potential victims of human trafficking, we support this element of the legislation wholeheartedly.

5. **Lines 931 to 949:** We agree with the recommendation to raise from age 16 to age 18 the age at which an individual is considered a victim of human trafficking. Likewise, we agree with the recommendation to make it a criminal offenses to entice any person under the age of 18 into sexual activity via an interactive computer service (**lines 986 to 995**).

6. **Posters** Given the extent to which we have blanketed truck stops or rest ares on I-95 in Fairfield and New Haven Counties with information about human trafficking, we can attest to the fact that posters in "plain view in a conspicuous location" are nonexistent. We support the recommendation for all truck stops, regardless of ownership, as well as clubs, hotels and motels to display such posters (**lines 1008 to 1019**).

7. We strongly recommend that the poster designed per HB 5623 look totally different from the one now used by some truck stops, per previous legislation. The current poster is way too small and too dense with text. The new poster must include the national human trafficking hotline number and the number to which you can text a suspected case of trafficking.

Finally, as far as the **termination of parental rights** are concerned (**lines 1116-1117 and 1170-1171**), we agree with the recommendation to discontinue the parental rights of a person who is convicted of a sexual assault that results in the conception of a child.

Sincerely, Emma Curtin and Amanda Barker

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