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Judiciary Committee
Public Hearing
3/14/2016

Testimony on
Raised H.B. 5052
An Act Strengthening Protections for Victims of Human Trafficking
and
Raised H.B. 5621
An Act Concerning Human Trafficking

The Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference is the public policy office of the Catholic Bishops in Connecticut. The Conference urges the Judiciary Committee to strengthen Connecticut's fight against human trafficking by supporting many of the changes to existing state statutes as proposed in HB 5052 and HB 5621. The Catholic Church, through its various organizations around the world, has a very long history in opposing human trafficking by assisting its victims and urging all governments to act decisively to curb this immoral practice, on a national and international level. Pope Francis, in referencing human trafficking, has stated "Let us not look the other way. This issue involves everyone."

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has reported that human trafficking is one of the largest criminal activities in the country. The United Nations estimates that this activity is valued at \$32 billion dollars annually. In its *Trafficking in Human Persons* report, published in 2015, the U.S. State Department called on all state and local governments to adopt a victim centered policy, aimed at increasing the coordination between law enforcement and social service agencies, as well as to strengthen the prevention efforts through programs and training. It is important to note that

Connecticut has already taken steps to address this horrific activity, but more must be done.

House Bills 5025 and 5621, as proposed, amend our existing statutes and would take Connecticut "in the right direction" in fighting the selling and using of human beings as personal property. The Conference specifically *supports* the following changes as outlined in these proposals.

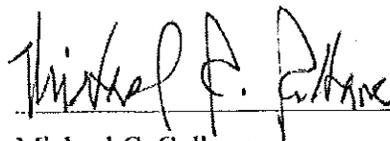
House Bill 5052 would:

- Determine a person as guilty of human trafficking of a person under eighteen years of age based on *one* violation of the statute; under current law, more than one occurrence is required. (Section 2(a))
- Establish the patronizing of a *trafficked minor* as a class B felony. (Section 3(d))

House Bill 5621 would:

- Expand the duties of the *Trafficking in Persons Council* to collect, analyze and disseminate data on human trafficking. The Conference is concerned, however, about the elimination of the Council's responsibility in identifying criteria for services needed by victims of human trafficking. Providing these services and monitoring their effectiveness should be the responsibility of this Council. (Section 1(d))
- Expand the education of hotel, motel and similar staff to recognize potential victims of human trafficking. (Sections 3,4,5)

The Conference urges the Judiciary Committee to support the aforementioned proposals as both contain provisions which would strengthen Connecticut in its fight against human trafficking.



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