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ESTABLISH A SEX TRAFFICKING TASK FORCE

Sex trafficking of minors is becoming a paramount issue for municipalities across the country as law enforcement officials uncover more and more underage prostitution rings. The statistics as they relate to child welfare are staggering: the average age of entry into prostitution is 12 years old; and the average life expectancy following entry is seven years, according to several sources including the United States Department of Justice and the FBI.

In response to this growing problem, Californians overwhelmingly voted to support Proposition 35, (Californians Against Sexual Exploitation Act), which will strengthen penalties against human traffickers, add fines to fund victim services, and require that all sex offenders disclose Internet accounts. This new law will also remove barriers to prosecute child sex traffickers, mandate training for law enforcement, and protect victims in court proceedings.

However, even with this new State legislation we face a critical issue with the youth in the foster care system. Children within foster care are at greater risk to become involved in sex trafficking for a number of reasons. These children often come from broken homes with a history of neglect and abuse, and foster children often overlap with runaway and homeless youth with a lack of resources that makes them more vulnerable and susceptible to exploitation.

In Los Angeles County alone, 174 youth under the age of 18 were arrested for prostitution related charges in 2010. And nearly two-thirds of the youth involved in sex-trafficking have had prior involvement with our Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). In many cases, these minors have suffered in their own homes before becoming involved in DCFS, and then move to a life on the streets where they are victimized and terrorized by local pimps. Even more shocking is that pimps are using child sex workers to recruit fellow foster care children at the DCFS Emergency Response Command Post and group homes across the County.

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DCFS must develop a strategy and plan to address this critical issue; and identify how to prevent foster youth from becoming involved in sex trafficking rings, along with a program to extricate current child sex workers from their prostitution rings.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors direct the Director of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to:

1. Convene a task force to address the issue of sex trafficking of minors within the foster care system in collaboration with the Los Angeles County Probation Department, Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Los Angeles County Police Chiefs Association, Los Angeles Police Department, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health and others.
2. Culminate monthly meetings of the task force and provide a report back within six months to include:
 - a. Background information on the scope of the problem in Los Angeles County;
 - b. Current barriers and hurdles to address the issue;
 - c. Best practices utilized in other jurisdictions across the Country; and
 - d. Recommendations related to DCFS minors involved in sex trafficking and a plan to effectively address the recruitment of these minors within the system.

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