

Senate Judiciary Committee In support of Senate Bill 61

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Chairman King and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share our support of Senate Bill 61.

As active members of the Anti-Sexual Exploitation Roundtable for Community Action (ASERCA) in Wichita, we recognize the need for law and policy that protects the health and well-being of all young people subjugated to all forms of human trafficking. We are writing in support of Senate Bill 61 regarding human trafficking legislation.

ASERCA was formed in 2006 with the objective to effectively prevent and intervene in situations of human trafficking/sexual exploitation through collaborative multidisciplinary direct service provision. Our mission is to provide services in a safe, secure, nurturing and healing environment to those who have been victimized or are at risk of sexual human trafficking. Current members of ASERCA include representatives from: The Wichita Children's Home, Child Advocacy Center of Sedgwick County, Department for Children and Families, Wichita Police Department/Exploited & Missing Child Unit, COMCARE, Catholic Charities/Harbor House, Federal Bureau of Investigations, US Attorney's Office, Wichita Child Guidance Center, 18th Judicial District, Via Christi Health, ICT SOS, Youthville, Salvation Army, Episcopal Social Services, Kansas Masonic Home, and YWCA Women's Crisis Center.

Wichita/Sedgwick County has been progressive in its involvement and focus on human trafficking and could be called the "epicenter of the battle" in the state of Kansas. Due to the number of cases and level of community collaboration, we continue to put coordination of efforts, co-location of services, and immediate response protocols at the forefront of our response to human trafficking. Through our experience, the first 72 hours after being removed from a human trafficking situation is a pivotal time for intervention. It is critical that law enforcement maintains the authority to investigate these cases and have the rapid assistance of the Department for Children and Families in determining safety, circumstances of the case, placement options, and next steps. This process requires a team approach and ASERCA promotes increased communication among agencies working with victims of human trafficking. The passing of this legislation will assist in our efforts and bring urgency to how these cases are handled locally and across the state. Ensuring that victims receive appropriate and effective intervention is essential to healing and moving forward to a life free from violence.

We feel this is a step in the right direction to accomplish our vision to addressing Human Trafficking in our State. We support and encourage movement forward with this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.