

## Human Trafficking Task Force

June 19<sup>th</sup> 2017 at 2:00pm  
Room C-600 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Michael C. Bilandic Building  
160 North LaSalle Street, Chicago, Illinois 60601

### Members:

Rep. Bellock	Rep. Ammons	Sen. Holmes
Rep. Wheeler, B.	Sen. McConaughay	Aaron Kustermann, ISP Delegate
Rep. Gabel	Sen. Martinez	

*Stacy Sloan, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, Statewide Human Trafficking Program Manager*

- Since, the passing of HB 6462 (Burns/Collins) of the 96<sup>th</sup> General Assembly that sought to comprehensively address human trafficking and the exploitation of children in the sex industry by (1) treating minors involved in prostitution as victims and abused children rather than criminals; (2) increasing penalties for persons who exploit children for human trafficking; and (3) expanding the tools that law enforcement agencies have to combat the problem. The bill also contained across-the-board penalty increases on pimps and “johns” for prostitution-related offenses. DCFS has been able to track the following numbers that have remained consistent over the past six years.
- DCFS has seen over 1,000 cases of minors being human trafficked from the following regions:
  - 50% from Cook County;
  - 18% from Northern Illinois including the collar counties, Rockford, and Quad Cities;
  - 17% from Central Illinois including Peoria, Springfield, Bloomington, and Metro East; and
  - 10% from Southern Illinois, including Carbondale and Charleston, DCFS believes this region is the most underreported of the State
- DCFS currently has 100 confirmed children in their Youth in Care Program who were victims of human trafficking, but believe there may be another 129 victims that have not yet been confirmed.
- DCFS has a media campaign “Are Children are not for Sale”, that has been successful at spreading awareness of human trafficking that runs targeted ads in various regions of the State to draw more awareness to this growing tragedy.

*Sen. Martinez* – Are undocumented immigrants reflected in these numbers?

*DCFS* – The agency at this time as no confirmed victims who are immigrants.

*Rep. Bellock* – Is the media campaign still running?

*DCFS* – Yes, it is still running and members may contact our office to put their district on the list of areas to run the media campaign.

*Rep. Gabel* – Are these numbers reflected of the entire State?

DCFS – Yes and these numbers have been static since 2011.

*Rep. Wheeler, B.* – These numbers are all very high, do you believe this is reflected of the many victims or are there many who go unreported?

DCFS – Yes, there are many who may go unreported, such as run-aways who may become a victim for a night looking for a place to stay. All federal and State agencies are mandatory reporters if they become aware of run-aways, but families are not required to report if their child runs away for a night.

*Sen. Holmes* – The Task Force needs to ensure that everyone is collaborating; the definition of human trafficking is not even well defined.

*Sen. McConnaughay* – We need to get everyone on the same page and working together. The FBI, Illinois State Police, and the many non-profits need to be working on this together.

*ISP Delegate* – The State Polices work with the state police agencies from all 50 states.

*Society of Metropolitan Family Services: Legal Aid Human Trafficking*

- Two part-time attorneys from the organization provided testimony. These two women represent both foreign and domestic victims of human trafficking.
- Since 2011, their hotline (312) 986-4200 has received calls from 199 people representing over 500 victims of human trafficking.
  - Half of these victims were abused out-of-state and moved to Illinois to flee their abuser(s).
  - 94% of their calls are about women.
  - 6% of their calls are about men, but men represent 1/3 of their human trafficking cases.
- They see more labor trafficking than sex trafficking, and that from their experience this is a common misconception. They mention their numbers are not necessarily a reflection of all victims just a report on their experiences.
- They see two barriers to victims for them making a call to report and wanting to pursue forward once a report has been made:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> it is difficult for the victim to bring case forward that results in charges being brought against the abuser(s).
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> foreign victims have difficulty dealing with immigration, and are worried about what may happen to them or their family as a result of their report being made.
- Community members are the number one source of calls to the hotline, with victims being the second largest source.
- Some examples of human trafficking of labor include, but is not limited to:
  - People being hired to work a certain wage at a restaurant, but being paid significantly less often below minimum wage.
  - Children being forced to selling magazines or other products door to door, claiming them to be for fundraisers.

- In Southern Illinois many of these children victims being forced to sell goods are foreign exchange students from Eastern Europe.

*Rep Gabel* – Are victims immune from prosecution if the crimes committed were because they were a victim of human trafficking?

*Legal Aid* – No, the only exemption is minors cannot be charged with prostitution. An example, we had a client who was arrested and charged for driving without a license. This woman was arrested with her “John” in the passenger seat forcing her to driving to a “clients” house where she was about to be raped for money.

*Rep. Wheeler, B.* – What is the face of human trafficking? Many sources are routinely cited that give contradictory numbers. Some sources say Illinois is in the top three for human trafficking, while other listed us at seven or below ten in statewide rankings.

*Legal Aid* – It is difficult to say because so many people involved in helping these victims do not report their numbers to a central location. We would not report are numbers if it was not for a grant provided to help victims of human trafficking.

*Sen. Martinez* – What is the process to convict these abusers who partake in human trafficking?

*Legal Aid* – Many victims wait over two years for justice if they ever receive any. The numbers of victims are increasing, but the prosecution/convictions are not increasing or appearing to happen in many instances.

*Sen. McConnaughay* – Please explain the types of labor trafficking?

*Legal Aid* – Any activity due to forced fraud coercion, this often includes sales, domestic work, salons, and restaurants. People are brought on for one wage, but paid below minimum wage. Many domestic workers are essentially slaves.

*Sen. McConnaughay* – What are the penalties, and how do they come to these households?

*Legal Aid* – Often someone who is trusted in the community recruits them. In many instances, the abusers are immigrants who go back to their home countries to recruit potential victims. The promise the victims access to education, fair wages, and offer them an opportunity to leave their current situation for something better in America. Once they arrive in America they are forced to work at the home, prohibited from leaving, the many promises are not kept, and if they attempt to leave their families are threatened.

*Sen. McConnaughay* – Why are these abusers not prosecuted and charge once people are made aware of these situations?

*Legal Aid* – It is difficult to prove because these are adults not children, and it is difficult to get victims to testify against their abuser.

*Legal Aid* – Some these victims of human trafficking are brought over by corporations as well through the H2B visa program not just by individuals. An example of this exploitation occurred after Hurricane Katrina where 500 guest workers from India were brought over to work on at a shipyard. These workers were brought over to work in Mississippi by the Gulf Coast Marine Service Company, and once they arrived in America were defrauded and exploited for their labor. <https://www.splcenter.org/seeking-justice/case-docket/signal-international-lawsuits>

*Rep. Ammons* – What states do well legislatively?

*Legal Aid* – California does a better job than most, but still faces a difficulty prosecuting and convicting abusers.

*Rep. Ammons* – What are we missing to go after these abusers, and what changes need to be made?

*Legal Aid* – Maybe simplifying the understanding of labor human trafficking. So that people accused of not paying accurate wages are not only able to be charged with human trafficking. Perhaps a tiered scale is an option to cover wage disputes that do not fall into the degree of human trafficking.

*Rep. Ammons* – Are changes to the visa system making things more difficult under the current administration?

*Legal Aid* – It is known as the H2B visa program, and Congress has attempted to make changes several times over the past few years, but it keeps being amended in the final stages to strip the language out. Many powerful people do not want these changes being made.

*ISP Delegate* – The State Police work closely with Texas on ways to identify victims and things to look for during traffic stops that may help an officer become aware that someone in the vehicle is a victim of human trafficking. More regarding this topic can be discussed in a closed door executive meeting.

*ISP Delegate* – How are salons regulated with licensing?

*Legal Aid* – We believe more can be done in this area some business will have twelve people claiming to live at the same address, this is a major red flag.

*Rep. Bellock* – IDFP may have this data and would be a great source to bring into this conversation.

## Human Trafficking Task Force Moving Forward

Sen. Martinez would like to hear from judicial representative to discuss convictions.

Rep. Bellock would like to hear from representatives from the FBI, State's Attorney, State Police, Local Support Groups, Salvation Army, and Homeland Security.

The Task Force intends to meet at least every other month throughout the State, and will try to organize a second meeting in Springfield between June 21 and June 30 during special session.