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## **AB 12 - (The ACCESS Act) Fact Sheet**

### **Background**

There are an estimated 800,000 human beings trafficked for domestic, labor, and sex slavery each year, both internationally and domestically. This number is ten times the number at the peak of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the 1700s. People today are sold for a few hundred dollars, compared to the equivalent of up to \$30,000 in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This cheap price for victims coupled with easy access and little chance of prosecution has made this modern day form of slavery one of the most lucrative of crimes.

Children are particularly vulnerable to this manipulative crime, sometimes being forced into sexual slavery through promises of work opportunities or through other forms of emotional bribery. Internationally, the median age for the entrance into prostitution is 14 year of age. In the United States, the ages vary from state to state, and in California the average age is about 12 years old.

### **Issue**

The business of child trafficking would not exist without the demand for the services of those children by the men and women purchasing them. Unfortunately, California punishes child predators inconsistently: a person who purchases the sexual services of a child is punished with a lower fine than a person who molests a child without a money exchange. There is no rationale for a distinction between these two types of predators. A minor child is unable to legally consent to sex, regardless of whether money is exchanged.

### **AB 12 Summary**

AB 12, the Abolition of Child Commerce, Exploitation, and Sexual Slavery Act of 2011 (the ACCESS Act) recasts the state's law relating to human trafficking and child sex slavery to treat the trafficked children as victims, rather than as prostitutes. The ACCESS Act will ensure that persons funding the illicit activities of human traffickers and paying for the sexual services of child sex slaves are treated as severely under the law as an adult engaging in a non-commercial sex act with a minor.

Specifically, the bill increases to \$25,000 the fine against an adult convicted of paying for the sexual services of a minor. The current fine is \$5,000. The bill, in addition, would direct those fines to be deposited into the Victim-Witness Assistance Fund to be available for appropriation to community agencies that help sexually exploited minors obtain education, counseling, and shelter.