

FACT SHEET: SB 1279

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L.A. COUNTY JUVENILE SEX TRAFFICKING PREVENTION AND PROTECTION PROJECT

UPDATED: APRIL 7, 2010

THE PROBLEM

The commercial sexual exploitation of minors is a crime whose devastating impacts ripple throughout communities in California, and whose effect is especially profound on the minors themselves who are exploited in many instances under heinous circumstances.

This problem requires a multi-faceted solution, including increased enforcement against traffickers, but also providing avenues of escape for the victims of trafficking as early as possible.

Many states and counties that have developed diversion programs aimed at re-engaging trafficking victims with their families and communities have had great success, and represent a more cost effective and successful solution than incarcerating these youth. Coupled with a strategy of prevention and enforcement against traffickers, diversion represents a vital rehabilitation option for these abused minors.

THE SOLUTION

The commercial sexual exploitation of minors takes place in many communities in California, however it is largely concentrated in the urban areas of the San Francisco/Oakland Bay Area and the greater Los Angeles area.

In the counties with the highest rates of sexual trafficking, explicitly authorizing District Attorneys to engage directly and collaboratively with community organizations and relevant law enforcement and social service entities to develop diversion programs for exploited minors represents a major step forward in addressing this problem. This approach will also serve as a model for other counties and the State as a whole in helping exploited minors realize a full, healthy and productive life.

SB 1279 would give statutory authority to the District Attorney's office of Los Angeles County to develop a pilot project, contingent upon local funding, for the purposes of developing a comprehensive, multidisciplinary model to address the needs and effective treatment of commercially sexually exploited minors. Having this pilot program in place may also help the County leverage funding for these efforts, including federal grants designated for these purposes which may require a local framework to be in place.

PREVIOUS OR PENDING LEGISLATION

This bill is similar to AB 499 (Swanson, 2008) which authorized an identical pilot project in Alameda County.

NY State passed the "Safe Harbour for Exploited Children Act" in 2007, which requires local districts to provide crisis intervention services and community based programming for commercially sexually exploited minors.

Senate Bill 6476 is pending in the Washington State Senate which would prohibit the prosecution of juveniles engaged in prostitution if it is their first offense, and would require similar diversion measures as New York's Safe Harbour law.

Federal Senate Bill 2925 (Wyden) would appropriate block grants to state and local governments with collaborative prevention and treatment programs in place.

SUPPORT (CONTINUED ON REVERSE)

- ❖ Children's Advocacy Institute (Sponsor)
- ❖ Los Angeles County District Attorney
- ❖ CA District Attorney's Association

- ❖ American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, District IX
- ❖ CA Teachers Association
- ❖ Crittenton Services for Children and Families
- ❖ CA Communities United Institute