

TO: Members of the Legislature

DATE:

RE: **SUPPORT SB 1279** – Diversion of Commercially Sexually Exploited Minors

I am writing to urge you to support SB 1279 (Pavley), which would authorize the creation of a multi-disciplinary pilot project in Los Angeles County aimed at helping the juvenile victims of sexual exploitation.

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 will also help the County leverage funding for these efforts, including federal grants designated for these purposes which would require a local framework to be in place. This approach will serve as a model for other counties and the state as a whole in helping exploited minors realize a full, healthy and productive life.

This bill is based on the precedent of AB 499 (Swanson, 2008), now law, which authorized an identical pilot project in Alameda County following very successful collaborative diversion efforts in that county. The commercial sexual exploitation of minors takes place in many communities in California, however Alameda and Los Angeles counties represent a disproportionate percentage of these cases.

Sexual trafficking 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. Diversion programs aimed at re-engaging trafficking victims with their families and communities result in better outcomes, and are more cost effective than incarceration. Coupled with a strategy of prevention and enforcement against traffickers, diversion represents a vital rehabilitation option for these abused minors at no cost to the state.

I urge you to support SB 1279, and the victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

Sincerely,