



## **Support HB 6462: “The Illinois Safe Children Act”!**

*Senate Sponsors:* Sens. Jacqueline Collins, Pamela Althoff, Iris Martinez, Kimberly Lightford, Dan Kotowski, Antonio Muñoz, Michael Noland, A. J. Wilhelmi, David Koehler, Martin A. Sandoval, Dale E. Risinger, Heather Steans, William Delgado, Jeffrey M. Schoenberg, Ira I. Silverstein, Mattie Hunter, Emil Jones, III, Michael Bond, Donne E. Trotter, M. Maggie Crotty, Linda Holmes and Kyle McCarter

*Status:* Passed House unanimously on March 25, with Chief Sponsor Rep. William Burns.

Passed Senate 52-2-1 on May 4.

### **Exploited Children are Crime Victims, not Offenders**

Under current Illinois and federal law, the commercial sexual exploitation of a child under the age of 18 is a form of human trafficking and carries severe penalties. These laws recognize that minors are unable to consent to their own commercial sexual exploitation. Yet, under other Illinois laws, these children can be and are still arrested and prosecuted for prostitution rather than provided with protection and assistance to recover from this severe form of abuse.

#### **Provisions**

- Remove child victims of commercial sexual exploitation from the purview of the criminal courts and remove outdated references to “juvenile prostitutes” from the criminal code
- Ensure a swift protective response and direct these children to protective care
- Prevent pimps from escaping justice by claiming they were unaware of a child’s age
- Add child sex trafficking and related crimes to the list of those covered by the state’s current wiretap authority, empowering law enforcement to rescue these victims and prevent future harm through stronger investigations and prosecutions
- Apply current vehicle impoundment provisions to a wider range of sexual exploiters, including “johns,” and raise the fee to recover impounded cars from \$200 to \$1000

### **Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the U.S. and Illinois**

At least 100,000 American children are victims of prostitution every year. Shockingly, the average age of first being exploited in prostitution is between 12 and 14 years old. The broader market for commercial sex endangers children, who are abused by traffickers aiming to turn a profit. Prostitution is widely advertised in venues such as Craigslist, where around 400 advertisements for commercial sex in the Chicago area are posted each day. In Chicago, approximately 16,000 people are regularly involved in prostitution on any given day.

### **The Prostitution of A Child Has Severe Physical, Emotional and Mental Health Consequences**

When adults choose to exploit a child for profit and for sex, it has a profound impact. It causes severe harm to the child and long-term costs to the state. The prostitution of a child results in:

- Exposure of the child to rape and physical assaults
- Exposure of the child to sexually transmitted diseases and a high risk of pregnancy
- Lasting mental health consequences: the majority of victims of prostitution suffer Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Danger of drug or alcohol abuse to cope with trauma, depression and self-blame
- Interruption of education and social development

*For more information contact Daria Mueller of CCH at [daria@chicagohomeless.org](mailto:daria@chicagohomeless.org) or Lynne Johnson of CAASE at [lynne@caase.org](mailto:lynne@caase.org) and visit [www.enddemandillinois.org](http://www.enddemandillinois.org).*



## ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING HB 6462

Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation  
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless  
Chicago Foundation for Women  
Chicago Legal Advocacy for Incarcerated Mothers  
Cook County Sheriff's Office  
Cook County State's Attorney's Office  
Counterquo.org  
The Dreamcatcher Foundation  
Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault  
Illinois Collaboration on Youth  
Illinois Maternal & Child Health Coalition  
Lutheran Social Services of Illinois  
Mujeres Latinas en Acción  
Pediatric AIDS Chicago Prevention Initiative  
Pillars  
Polaris Project  
Project IRENE  
Protestants for the Common Good  
Rape Victim Advocates  
The Salvation Army  
DePaul Law School Schiller Ducanto and Fleck Family Law Center  
The Voices and Faces Project  
Women of Power Alumni Association  
YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago