AG COAKLEY URGES PASSAGE OF ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING LEGISLATION (5-18-11)

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AG COAKLEY URGES PASSAGE OF ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING LEGISLATION
Bill Aimed At Eliminating Exploitation Of Victims For Sexual Servitude Or Labor;
Massachusetts Is Currently One Of Only 4 States Without Human Trafficking Laws

BOSTON - Seeking to eradicate the exploitation of victims for sexual servitude and labor in Massachusetts, Attorney General Martha Coakley today advocated for passage of human trafficking legislation before the Joint Committee on the Judiciary.

In January, AG Coakley and a coalition of legislators, law enforcement, and advocates, including lead sponsors Senator Mark Montigny and House Judiciary Chairman Eugene O'Flaherty, filed legislation (An Act Relative to the Commercial Exploitation of People) that would for the first time establish human trafficking as a crime in Massachusetts. Massachusetts is currently one of only 4 states that does not have a human trafficking statute.

Human trafficking is considered the second largest and single fastest growing illegal industry in the world. Experts estimate that 27 million people are trafficked internationally and domestically, bringing in $32 billion annually. The average age of entry into the sex trade is children between the ages of 12-14 years old. They are brought into the life at that young age, and then often forced to stay with their pimps and endure repeated violence, rape, abuse, threats, and other inhumane treatment.

"Let there be no doubt - people of every background are being exploited for sexual servitude and labor across the world, across this country, and right in our own backyard," Coakley said. "There are only 4 states remaining that do not have human trafficking as a crime. That must change, and it must change now. Our bill sends a clear message that this brutal exploitation is unacceptable in Massachusetts and gives law enforcement the tools to address it."

The bill attacks all three aspects of human trafficking by addressing the supply and the demand-side, as well as further supporting victims. The legislation does this by creating two new felonies, increasing penalties for current "John" crimes, and creating an interagency task force.

Specifically, An Act Relative to the Commercial Exploitation of People does the following:

" Creates the crime of trafficking of persons for sexual servitude, which has a penalty of no more than 20 years in state prison;

" Creates the crime of trafficking of persons for forced labor, which has a penalty of no more than 15 years in state prison;

" Imposes higher penalties for those who exploit child victims under 18 years of age versus adult victims for both crimes (life or any term of years)

" Imposes a minimum mandatory sentence of 10 years in prison for any second or subsequent offense of either crime;

" Allows forfeiture of funds and enables funds to be paid to victims in any restitution order from the court;

" Creates an inter-agency task force to study human trafficking that is led by the Attorney General; and

" Increases penalties for current "John" crimes to address the demand side of human trafficking by increasing the fines from a $500 maximum to $5,000 maximum, and by increasing the penalties from 1 year in jail to 2 ½ years in jail.

Today's hearing was held at the State House in the Gardner Auditorium. Legislators, District Attorneys, Law Enforcement and Victim Advocates testified before the Committee.

Attorney General Coakley's written testimony on Human Trafficking Legislation can be found here.

This legislation filed on January 20, 2011, is supported by:

Mark C. Montigny Senator (D-New Bedford)
Eugene L. O'Flaherty Representative (D-Chelsea)
Steven A. Baddour Senator (D-Methuen)
Bruce E. Tarr Senator (R-Gloucester)
Russell Holmes Representative (D-Boston)
Katherine Clark Senator (D-Melrose)
Timothy R. Madden Representative (D-Nantucket)
Sean Garballey Representative (D-Arlington)
Richard T. Moore Senator (D-Uxbridge)
Kay Khan Representative (D-Newton)
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John J. Binienda Representative (D-Worcester)
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James E. Timilty Senator (D-Walpole)
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Martha Walz Representative (D-Boston)
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Edward Coppinger Representative (D-Boston)
James O'Day Representative (D-West Boylston)
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Byron Rushing Representative (D-Boston)
Barry R. Finegold Senator (D-Andover)
John Hart, Jr. Senator (D-Boston)
Karen Spilka Senator (D-Ashland)
Louis L. Kafka Representative (D-Stoughton)
Ayanna Pressley, City Councilor At-Large, Boston City Council
Michael W. Morrissey, Norfolk County District Attorney
Joseph D. Early, Worcester County District Attorney
Gerard T. Leone Jr., Middlesex County District Attorney
Jonathan W. Blodgett, Essex County District Attorney
C. Samuel Sutter, Bristol County District Attorney
David F. Capeless, Berkshire County District Attorney
Daniel F. Conley, Suffolk County District Attorney
David E. Sullivan, Northwestern District Attorney
Mark D. Mastroianni, Hampden County District Attorney
Michael O'Keefe, Cape and Islands District Attorney
Timothy J. Cruz, Plymouth County District Attorney
Richard Brown, President, State Police Association of Massachusetts
Mark K. Leahy, Northborough Police Chief, President of Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association
Steven A. Mazzie, President, Massachusetts Major City Chiefs
Edward Davis, Boston Police Commissioner
Terrence M. Cunningham, Chief, Wellesley Police
Ronald E. Teachman, Chief, New Bedford Police
Massachusetts AFL-CIO
New England Regional Council of Carpenters
Painters & Allied Trades District Council #35
Massachusetts Jobs with Justice
Germaine Lawrence
Community VOICES
Chelsea Collaborative
La Comunidad, Inc. (Everett)
Dominican Development Center (JP)
MA Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
Boston Area Rape Crisis Center
Chinese Progressive Association (Boston)
The Brazilian Immigrant Center (Allston / Brighton)
American Friends Service Committee
Nivasa Foundation
SEIU 509
Brazilian Women's Group
Lutheran Social Services of New England
My Life My Choice Project
Polaris Project
The Emancipation Network/MadeBySurvivors
Agencia ALPHA
Massachusetts Children's Alliance
Mass. Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (MassCOSH)
Women's Bar Association
Roxbury Youthworks
Jane Doe, Inc.

AIDS Action
MA Childrens Alliance
Worcester CARD Program
MA Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
American Massage Therapy Association, Massachusetts Chapter
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