



NATIONAL CONFERENCE *of* STATE LEGISLATURES

The Forum for America's Ideas

March 12, 2014

Honorable John Coynyn
United States Senate
517 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Bruce W. Starr
*Senator
Oregon
President, NCSL*

Thomas W. Wright
*Chief of Staff to Speaker
Alaska
Staff Chair, NCSL*

William T. Pound
Executive Director

RE: S. 1738 “Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act”

Dear Senator Cornyn:

On behalf of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), we are writing to express support of S. 1738, the “Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2013”. NCSL is the bipartisan national organization that represents the legislatures of our nation's 50 states, its commonwealths and territories.

NCSL applauds your leadership in establishing a mechanism that melds together federal and state priorities with a common goal of eradicating the inhumane practice of human trafficking. The Domestic Trafficking Victims Fund and specifically the model block grants proposed in this legislation will aid state and local governments in developing victim-centered programs, training law enforcement, and prosecuting human traffickers. State policy makers appreciate this federal support and are grateful that funding occurs through criminal penalties which will not adversely impact existing federal criminal justice funding streams to states.

NCSL recognizes that human trafficking has a pervasive and negative state impact across the United States. In response to this growing problem, NCSL was the first national state organization to approve a policy position addressing the issue of human trafficking to raise state awareness and educate state legislatures on best practices. This policy was unanimously passed in 2012 and is contained within our Criminal Justice Policy Directive. The human trafficking portion of this policy directive condemns the act of human trafficking, calls for state/federal partnerships, an increased dialogue between state and federal policymakers, and requests adequate funding for states to deal with the issues confronting victims of these terrible acts. The passage of this policy shows the importance of the issue and that swift action must be taken. The full policy directive is attached.

In addition to our policy directive, NCSL has spent the last five years increasing awareness and prioritizing the issue of domestic minor sex trafficking through a series of formal educational workshops. These workshops were led and highly attended by state legislators, state legislative staff, federal representatives, and groups that work with victims.

Human trafficking has become an increased concern for many state legislators throughout the country. Awareness of trafficking issues has led to an abundance of state laws since the first law

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was passed in the state of Washington in 2003. These laws attack the issue in varying ways: including the creation of task forces to study approaches to combating this epidemic to strengthened criminal penalties on traffickers to increased measures that establish services for identified victims. During the 2011, 2012 and 2013 legislative sessions combined, 45 states enacted 221 laws that address human trafficking. At this point in the 2014 legislative sessions, 35 states have introduced 277 anti-trafficking bills and resolutions.

Again, we commend you for your leadership for introducing S. 1738 and want to work with you to advance this important piece of legislation. NCSL believes that this bill respects existing state authority in this area and will support state efforts to eradicate the terrible practice of human trafficking. For additional information, please contact Susan Parnas Frederick (202-624-3566) or Jennifer Arguinzoni (202-624-8691) in NCSL's Washington, D.C. office.

Respectfully,



Assemblyman William Horne, Nevada
Co-Chair, NCSL
Committee on Law and Criminal Justice



Representative Eric Watson, Tennessee
Co-Chair, NCSL
Committee on Law and Criminal Justice