

March 5, 2013

Dear Colleague,

I write to you today to offer a bill to protect children throughout the United States and ensure that child welfare agencies have the tools to understand the critical needs of child victims of human trafficking and the resources to appropriately serve them.

Children are amongst the most vulnerable groups in the world and throughout the United States hundreds of thousands of children are at risk of becoming victims of trafficking. Once a child is trafficked, they are often sold into forced prostitution and labor, preventing them from growing up in a safe environment, causing them to be exposed to horrors no child should have to experience.

Law enforcement officials and state child welfare agencies are often the first points of contact for a child victim of trafficking, but these professionals are rarely given the resources needed to identify and protect the innocent victims. These officials must be educated on federal and state level laws in order to provide support to the protection of the rights of child victims.

The bill seeks to strengthen the child welfare response to child trafficking by providing child welfare employees with appropriate guidance on how to identify and educate children at risk of exploitation. It also seeks to ensure that child welfare agencies place victims of trafficking in homes with the capacity to meet their personal needs.

This legislation also adds a human trafficking classification to the child welfare reporting system in order to ensure appropriate services are provided to victims and to monitor trends in trafficking. Just as critically, it extends specialized care and services to age 21 for foster youth that have been trafficked.

The Congressional Budget Office has also indicated that there are no direct costs associated with this legislation.

The Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking (CAST), Shared Hope International and End Child Pornography and Trafficking (ECPAT International), leaders in the anti-trafficking community, have all demonstrated support for this bill.

If you would like to serve as an original co-sponsor or have any questions regarding this legislation, please contact Jenny Wood of my staff at Jenny.Wood@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,
KAREN BASS
Member of Congress