



Date: September 17, 2013

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council

From: Councilmember Patrick O'Donnell, Fourth District
Councilmember Suja Lowenthal, Second District
Councilmember Steven Neal, Ninth District

Subject: Sex Trafficking of Minors

Background:

The growth in the trafficking of children for sex and labor within Long Beach is an injustice that blights our community. A recent report released from the Los Angeles County Probation Department states that a significant percentage of children arrested in Los Angeles County for sex trafficking are arrested in the South Bay and local areas.

A disproportionately large number of these youth have been under the jurisdiction of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCSF) at some point in their experience. Panderers, often known as pimps, frequently abuse the foster care system as a means to target vulnerable children to sell for sex. The sale of children for sex has become, in some cases, more profitable than selling drugs, and has increasingly been used as a source of income for gangs. Pimps, on average, profit \$162,500 annually for each child illegally trafficked for sex. The growing demand for sex with minors can, in large part, be attributed to the lack of effective and appropriate legal consequences for consumers of illicit sexual encounters with children.

Current laws prosecute children for prostitution and prostitution related offenses, and erroneously punish the victims rather than the customers paying for sex- also known as johns- who are perpetrating and financing these crimes. In order to address this systemic cycle of sexual violence, the appropriate parties involved must be held accountable to the highest letter of the law. Consumers of sex with minors should be prosecuted as sexual offenders for violating children and deteriorating the health of our community and our youth. The California Penal Code should be amended to address the human rights violations being committed in our communities.

On Tuesday, September 3rd, the Los Angeles County Supervisors passed an amendment in support of reforming the California Penal Code to reflect stricter consequences for paying for and engaging in lewd activities with minors. Additionally, they have stated support for HR 2805 Stop Sex Trafficking Act 2013. It is prudent for Long Beach to enact a similar motion and stand in solidarity with the community at large in support of protecting children from

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sexual violence and abuse. Steps must be taken at the local, county, state, and federal level to coordinate efforts to hold johns accountable for their actions.

Recommendation:

Respectfully request the City Manager to work with appropriate staff to add language to the City of Long Beach State Legislative Agenda that enables staff to lobby the California Legislature to increase penalties for individuals paying a minor for sex, including examining the creation of a felony for this crime, increasing monetary penalties, requiring registration as a sex-offender, forfeiting certain assets, and other appropriate measures that can prove effective to curtail this crime.

Fiscal Impact:

No significant fiscal impact.