



For Immediate Release:
August 9, 2011

Contact:
Adam Sharon
(202) 225-7084

U.S. Rep. Karen Bass Introduces Bills to Strengthen Child Welfare Agencies Responses to Trafficking, Establishes Task Force to Combat Cyber Human Trafficking

H.R. 2730 Strengthening the Child Welfare Response to Trafficking Act and H.R. 2801 Eliminate and Stop Abuse, Frequent Exploitation, and Trafficking on the Internet (E-SAFETI) Task Force Supported by Leading Organizations Combating Human Trafficking

Los Angeles, CA – U.S. Rep. Karen Bass (D-CA) introduced two separate pieces of bipartisan legislation tackling human trafficking especially targeting youth and minors.

A longtime advocate for improving the foster care system, Rep. Bass has a deep history championing causes and crafting policy to support at-risk youth and strengthen the child welfare system.

"With increased popularity of social networking sites, child trafficking has exploded online and in many of our communities," said **U.S. Rep. Karen Bass**. "We as a society must do everything in our power to protect our children even if they are not our own. These bills are critical to combat child trafficking and online exploitation."

Strengthening the Child Welfare Response to Trafficking Act, H.R. 2730, seeks to improve the child welfare response to trafficking by strengthening the child welfare system to identify, document, and counsel children at risk of exploitation.

"Congresswoman Bass has taken essential action through H.R. 2730, recognizing that many child victims of commercial sexual exploitation are already in the dependency system but are not consistently identified. The bill will fix a critical gap in our government's responses to our nation's most vulnerable children and further support the states in tackling the problem of domestic minor sex trafficking," said **Congresswoman Linda Smith (ret.), Founder of Shared Hope International**.

"Department of Health and Human Services and state child welfare agencies have a critical role

to play in identifying and providing services for child trafficking victims, both foreign and domestic because a great many victims have a history of child welfare involvement. We thank Congresswoman Bass for taking action to bring child welfare into our response to trafficking," said **Carol Smolenski, Executive Director of End Child Pornography and Trafficking-USA.**

"The United States government needs to do better at utilizing existing state resources to combat modern-day slavery in our own backyards. HR 2730, as introduced by Representative Bass will assist both labor and sex trafficked children be identified and provided specialize assistance by our State child welfare agencies," added **Stephanie Richard, Policy & Legal Services Director, Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking.**

Eliminate and Stop Abuse, Frequent Exploitation, and Trafficking on the Internet (E-SAFETI) Task Force will create a public-private task force to examine and make recommendations addressing the problems of cyber human trafficking. Members of the task force will include leaders from the public sector, academia, the advocacy and technology communities.

"Human trafficking and child exploitation are horrific crimes particularly when facilitated through hidden online platforms. Exploring new ways communication technology and public-private partnerships could be used in the global effort to combat human trafficking is necessary to curtailing this burgeoning problem," said **Fred Humphries, VP, U.S. Government Affairs, Microsoft.**

"We commend Congresswoman Karen Bass for introducing legislation that brings together a wide group of expert stakeholders from the public and private sectors to make recommendations to Congress on how best to combat web-based human trafficking activity. We look forward to working with Congresswoman Bass and other stakeholders to find ways to bring human traffickers to justice and to prevent them from abusing the Internet as a means to commit this horrific crime," said **Kenneth Thompson II, Global Chief Legal Officer of LexisNexis Legal & Professional.**

"The vast majority of sexually exploited and trafficked girls FAIR Fund assists were sold online. When a child is sold online, it is not only the trafficker who profits but also the online classified ad company and the person who buys her. The child is left with the trauma and abuse for the rest of his or her life," added **Andrea Powell, Executive Director and co-founder of FAIR Fund, a D.C. based nonprofit empowering youth to stay safe or overcome situations of human trafficking worldwide.**

-30-

Karen Bass represents the 33rd congressional district, which includes Los Angeles, Hollywood, and Culver City and was the 67th Speaker of the California Assembly.