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SHARED HOPE INTERNATIONAL APPLAUDS POE RESOLUTION ON DOMESTIC MINOR SEX TRAFFICKING

Vancouver, WA -- More than 100,000 of our children are victims of sex trafficking right now, and Shared Hope International is firmly in support of a federal resolution recently presented by Rep. Ted Poe (R-TX), calling for greater federal attention and resources to the issue of domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST).

"The resolution introduced by Congressman Poe of Texas recognizes that our young girls and boys are being victimized on a daily basis, and law enforcement and social service providers lack the resources necessary to care for them," remarked Linda Smith, Founder and President of Shared Hope International. "This resolution is a statement about the need for protective shelter, the elimination of a criminal response to the victims, and resources such as training of law enforcement men and women, who come into contact every day with these kids."

House Resolution 1379, sponsored by Representatives Ted Poe (R-TX), Jim Costa (D-CA), Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), and Christopher Smith (R-NJ), was introduced to the U.S. House of Representatives on May 19, 2010. H.Res. 1379 calls on the United States Attorney General to make the arrest and prosecution of buyers a federal priority, and also addresses the need for standardized methods of identification and response to DMST victims.

The resolution directs states to enact laws that establish specialized residential facilities, give a presumption of victim status instead of a punitive criminal justice response, make victim compensation funding available to victims of sex trafficking, increase penalties and fines for buyers and sellers of DMST victims, and create mandatory training for law enforcement. This federal leadership is critical to continuing state initiatives, such as Protected Innocence laws passed in Washington, and introduced in other states.

The resolution also calls on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to establish pilot shelters for juvenile trafficking victims which was originally authorized in the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2005.

Federal legislation related to H.Res. 1379 was introduced in December 2009 by Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR). Wyden's Senate Bill 2925 would establish a national grant program to benefit state law enforcement entities which aggressively investigate and prosecute DMST and establish victim protections, awarding six one-year block grants of \$2.5 million in different regions of the United States. The grant monies would be used to provide shelter and services, as well as provide training for law enforcement and social service providers.

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“The National Report on Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking: America’s Prostituted Children”, the result of Shared Hope International research funded by the U.S.

Department of Justice and presented to Congress in the fall of 2009, revealed a startling reality: men who buy sex with children in the United States escape the label of sex offender through the exchange of money. The child is seen as the criminal - labeled as a prostitute - not the victim. The men renting their young bodies are rarely arrested for the serious crimes committed against the children.

Smith, a former U.S. Congresswoman (WA 3rd District, 1994-98), is the primary author of **The National Report**, and is recognized as a world leader in the fight against sex trafficking. She recently published **Renting Lacy**, a book that shares the darkness of the child sex trafficking underworld in a compelling story. **“The National Report on Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking: America’s Prostituted Children”** is the only nationwide report on this issue.

Shared Hope International has also linked arms with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which states that more than 100,000 of our nation’s children are victims of sex trafficking right here in the United States. **The National Report** assessed domestic minor sex trafficking - the prostitution of America’s kids - in 10 U.S. locations, including Dallas, Las Vegas, and Clearwater, Fla.

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ABOUT SHARED HOPE INTERNATIONAL:

Shared Hope International, founded in 1998 by Linda Smith, exists to rescue and restore women and children in crisis. We are leaders in a worldwide effort to prevent and eradicate sex trafficking and slavery through education and public awareness.