



MAKING THE GRADE:

Shared Hope International Launches the Protected Innocence Initiative *Washington Receives a "C"*

Vancouver, WA—Washington state receives a "C" as Shared Hope International launches the national Protected Innocence Initiative. Washington's laws have been analyzed using the Protected Innocence Legislative Framework for the level of protection provided to children in the state from domestic minor sex trafficking.

"We believe it appropriate to launch this effort in Washington because it is one of the leading states to pass anti-trafficking laws," says former U.S. Congresswoman Linda Smith (WA, 1994-98), Founder and President of Shared Hope International.

The Protected Innocence Initiative is a holistic strategy to promote zero tolerance of child sex trafficking based on more than five years of research conducted by Shared Hope International, published and submitted to Congress in 2009 as **The National Report on Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking**.

"Early in our research it was clear that responses to child sex trafficking must originate at the state level. The Protected Innocence Initiative begins by establishing the base policies needed to assure a uniform state by state standard treatment of prostituted children as victims and the treatment of those who buy and sell that innocence as the serious criminals they are," said Smith.

Under this initiative, Shared Hope International will release 51 (50 states and Washington D.C.) individual report cards based on the Protected Innocence Legislative Framework, an analysis of state laws, performed by Shared Hope International and the American Center for Law and Justice. Each State's existing laws will be measured against a common standard that creates a safe environment for children.

Washington is the first state to receive a grade under the initiative, and Oregon will follow on Jan. 14, 2011.

"The grade of 'C' that Washington has received is not satisfactory," added Washington Attorney General, Rob McKenna. "We need to hold ourselves up to the highest possible standard. It is crucial that our law enforcement is knowledgeable and responsive to the needs of these victims."

With strong penalties in place for buying commercial sex with a minor, Washington's legislative framework is now strong in its criminal provision to deter buyers who demand sex with minors and to deter traffickers and facilitators from engaging in the crime of commercial sexual abuse of a minor.

"Before the 2010 changes to the state law which toughened penalties, we surely would have had a failing grade because of the weak provisions calling only for a small \$500 fine and a few months in jail for individuals buying sex with minors. I commend Senators Stevens and Hargrove, and the Senate and House Leadership, our attorney general, and governor for making these important changes," noted Smith.

The most prominent lingering gaps in Washington's laws?

- The human trafficking law which fails to define "involuntary servitude," does not contain a separate provision for child sex trafficking, and requires proof of force, fraud or coercion used in the enslavement of the victim
- The lack of protective provisions for victims of domestic minor sex trafficking, especially in the area of victim-friendly court procedures, access to financial restitution and remedies to aid in the cost of restoration, and access to expungement of criminal records to remove the cloud of criminal history from their futures
- Criminal justice tools to aid in investigation and prosecution are needed to empower law enforcement to pursue and win cases of domestic minor sex trafficking.

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“While the 2010 changes raised our grade and gave us the resulting “C”, we must ask ourselves, is a barely passing grade good enough for our children? Do we agree with laws where our police and prosecutors are given stronger criminal justice tools for investigation of drug offenses than those available to them for fighting for the protection of our children from those who would sell their young bodies for profit and pleasure?” commented Linda Smith, Shared Hope International Founder and President.

“We are calling on Washington’s legislature to craft laws that will *ensure* all children are kept safe from commercial sexual exploitation through prostitution, pornography and sexual performance, and when victimized by traffickers and people who buy sex from these children, assuring these criminals receive the justice they deserve,” added Smith.

Evidence of domestic minor sex trafficking in Washington demonstrates the need for comprehensive legislation.

- in December 2010, a SeaTac-area pimp was charged with pimping children, after prosecutors say Ronnie Leon Tramble, Jr., treated girls as young as 14 as “slaves” while making thousands of dollars a week exploiting them on Seattle-area streets
- in November 2010, nine of the 99 suspected pimps arrested in the three-day national Operation Cross Country prostitution crackdown were caught in King, Pierce and Snohomish counties. Two dozen of the 69 total prostituted children found in the effort were in Washington state.

A complete PDF packet – containing the Washington Report Card, analysis and recommendations, and Protected Innocence Methodology – is available for download at this location:
www.sharedhope.org/WhatWeDo/BringJustice/PolicyRecommendations.aspx

The Protected Innocence Legislative Framework is the legal analysis tool of the Protected Innocence Initiative, a holistic strategy to promote zero tolerance for child sex trafficking. In partnership with the American Center for Law and Justice, Shared Hope International conducted a comprehensive analysis of Washington’s existing laws based on six areas of law critical to protecting from and the responding to domestic minor sex trafficking. The results of this analysis laid the foundation for the Protected Innocence Report Card, which grades the level of protection in Washington. The Protected Innocence Legislative Framework solely evaluates a state’s existing laws and does not evaluate enforcement or implementation.

The methodology was vetted by experts in the anti trafficking field including Ambassador Mark Lagoon (U.S. Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons 2007-2009) and directors from the following organizations: the National District Attorneys association; American Bar Association Center on children and the Law; the Protection Project at Johns Hopkins university School of Advanced International Studies; ECPAT-USA; Children at Risk Houston, Texas; and A Future Not a Past, Atlanta Georgia.

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ABOUT SHARED HOPE INTERNATIONAL: Shared Hope International was founded in 1998, by former U.S. Congresswoman Linda Smith, and 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 using a three-pronged strategy: prevent, rescue & restore, and bring justice. For more information about Shared Hope International, and the *Protected Innocence Initiative*, go to www.sharedhope.org.