



DEPARTMENT of CHILDREN and FAMILIES

Making a Difference for Children, Families and Communities



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Commissioner

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Commission Katz Statement Regarding Proposed Federal Child Sex Trafficking Data And Response Act

HARTFORD – Department of Children and Families Commissioner Joette Katz said today that federal legislation to require states to improve how they respond to domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST) is an important step forward in helping the victims.

"Sex trafficking of children is the most horrible victimization imaginable, and so it is hard to come to terms with its reality right here in the United States," said Commissioner Katz, who is testifying Tuesday before the U.S. Senate Finance Committee regarding Connecticut's work to prevent trafficking and respond to its victims. "However, we know that 200,000 American children are potentially trafficked into the sex trade each year. It is something we must face and something to which we must respond."

Since 2008, when collaborative efforts in Connecticut significantly increased -- both internally at the Department and externally with the community -- there have been approximately 130 children who have been identified and confirmed as victims of DMST. Of those victims identified, 98 percent have been involved with child welfare services in some manner, and many of these children have been victimized while legally in the care and custody of the Department.

To address the problem, over the past two years, the Department has been collaborating with local, state and federal law enforcement to better coordinate the response, particularly as it relates to the children in the child welfare system. The Department has found that the most significant barriers have been the identification of minor victims, development of appropriate responses and enforcement of the laws leading to the arrest and prosecution of persons responsible for these crimes.

Earlier this month, the Connecticut state legislature approved a bill that provides a comprehensive response to address the issue of sexual exploitation and human trafficking by enhancing criminal penalties for the purchase and trafficking of minors, protecting child victims and adopting a criminal justice framework for investigation and prosecution. The proposed federal legislation would require states to establish plans and services to protect child victims, identify and document each child victim, ensure that DMST victims are considered victims of abuse and neglect, and to take additional measures to prevent and respond to DMST.

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