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Media Advisory For:  
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## **WA Senate Hearing on New Bill to Fight Child Sex Trafficking Sponsored by Sen. Kohl-Welles**

*Fmr. WA Congresswoman and Pres. Of Shared Hope  
International Linda Smith Returns to Testify*

### ***SB 6251 Increases Online Accountability to Deter Commercial Sexual Abuse of Minors***

Vancouver, WA – A public hearing on Washington's SB 6251 which would regulate advertising of commercial sexual abuse of minors will take place on Friday, January 27. The proposed bill sponsored by Seattle Senator Jeanne Kohl-Welles (D-WA) establishes a new crime of advertising commercial sexual abuse of a minor in Washington state. Linda Smith, former Washington Congresswoman and President and Founder of Shared Hope International, a national anti-trafficking organization, will join Rev. John Vaughn of Groundswell, the social action initiative of Auburn Seminary, Mayor Mike McGinn, King County Prosecuting Atty. Dan Satterberg, Councilman Tim Burgess, and representatives from the Seattle Police Dep. and King County Sheriff's Dep. to testify in support of SB 6251.

Facilitators of commercial sex with minors have largely avoided liability even as serious crackdowns on domestic minor sex trafficking have hit the nation. Washington state is again taking leadership in the effort to combat child sex trafficking by targeting facilitators, individuals or business that assist, enable, aid, or financially benefit from commercial sex, who serve as key criminal actors in the sex trafficking of children.

#### **WHO:**

Seattle Mayor Mike McGinn

Linda Smith, U.S. Congress 1995-99, Washington State Senate/House 1983-94, and President and Founder of Shared Hope International

Rev. John Vaughn, Executive Vice President of Auburn Seminary, and one of the conveners of a clergy coalition asking Village Voice Media to shut down Backpage.com's adult section

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King County Prosecuting Attorney Dan Satterberg  
Seattle Councilman Tim Burgess

Representatives from the Seattle Police Department and the King County Sheriff's Department

**WHAT:**

Senate Hearing on SB 6251

**WHEN:**

Friday, January 27 at 1:30pm PST

**WHERE:**

Senate Hearing Room 1 | J.A. Cherberg Building | Olympia, WA

Provisions of the bill:

Establishes a new crime of advertising commercial sexual abuse of a minor in Washington.

Prohibits the offender from claiming mistake of age and requires that they made "a reasonable bona fide attempt to ascertain the age of the minor appearing in the advertisement by requiring , prior to publication of the advertisement, production of a driver's license, marriage license, birth certificate, or other governmental or educational identification card or paper of the minor depicted in the advertisement and did not rely solely on oral or written allegations of the minor's age or the apparent age of the minor. "

Shared Hope International is a leader in the national initiative to bring greater accountability to online facilitators by rallying 17 other activist organizations to call on over 60 Mayors to encourage Village Voice Media to stop illegal forms of commercial sex advertisements on Backpage.com. Last year, Seattle Mayor Mike McGinn requested Village Voice Media, owner of online classified site Backpage.com, take a stronger, more transparent action to protect women and children from being exploited through advertisements on their website. According to an independent study by Advanced Interactive Media Group, Backpage.com's "Adult" section is expected to earn Village

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Voice Media \$24.8 million, accounting for over two thirds of the \$36 million in revenue projected to be earned by all tracked online classified ads facilitating commercial sex. Despite pressure from religious groups, advocates, and state officials, Backpage.com is not responding with solutions. Senator Kohl-Welles' bill is part of a series of legislation that impacts or relates to domestic minor sex trafficking introduced in Washington last week.

## MEDIA MATERIALS

To access Washington's Protected Innocence Report Card that grades the state on its level of protection against domestic minor sex trafficking, please visit: [www.sharedhope.org/reportcards.aspx](http://www.sharedhope.org/reportcards.aspx)

For media convenience, a variety of video clips and resources, including DMST survivor comments – are available at this location: [www.sharedhope.org/media/piimediadownloads.aspx](http://www.sharedhope.org/media/piimediadownloads.aspx)

**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](http://www.sharedhope.org)

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