

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Taryn Mastrean
602-818-3955
Taryn@sharedhope.org



WA HOUSE HEARING ON COMPREHENSIVE BILL TO FIGHT CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING

Survivors of trafficking testify for SB 5669 and SB 5488 to bring justice to Washington's trafficked youth

Vancouver, WA – A public hearing on SB 5669 and 5488 will take place on Tuesday, March 12. Together these bills would close gaps in Washington's laws to ensure there are no places for traffickers and buyers of child sex trafficking to hide in Washington. Proposed bill SB 5669, sponsored by Senator Mike Padden (R-WA), would update the body of laws dealing with human trafficking to strengthen Washington's ability to fight human trafficking, including criminalizing use of the Internet to sell or purchase sex acts or commit sex trafficking. Proposed bill SB 5488, sponsored by Seattle Senator Jeanne Kohl-Welles (D-WA), raises the stakes for Internet exploitation of children by imposing an additional fine when commercial sexual exploitation of children involves an Internet advertisement. Both bills passed the Senate unanimously on March 4, 2013 and are scheduled for public hearing in the House Committee on Public Safety at 8:30 AM on March 12, 2013.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE:

WHAT: House Hearing on SB 5669 and 5488

WHEN: Tuesday, March 12 at 8:30 am PST

WHERE: Hearing Room D, John L. O'Brien Building, 504 15th Ave, S.W., Olympia

WHO: Senator Mike Padden (R-WA)

Brianna, Survivor Advocate; Intern, Shared Hope International

Marie, Survivor Advocate; Resources Coordinator, Shared Hope International

ABOUT THE SURVIVORS:

Brianna and Marie know firsthand the importance of strong laws.

Three years ago, Brianna was targeted by a trafficker while working as a waitress at a local restaurant. The trafficker appeared as an older boyfriend and convinced her to travel to Phoenix with him to meet his family. Days before they left for Arizona, a friend intervened with the help of a trained law enforcement officer and Linda Smith, President and Founder of Shared Hope International. Today, Brianna serves as an intern at Shared Hope and attends nursing school. Stories like Brianna's are only possible because trained, knowledgeable law enforcement had the tools they needed to protect Brianna.

Marie was five years old when she was first used in child pornography. By nine years old, Marie's stepfather had taken her virginity and was selling her to friends for sex. Marie became pregnant by one of the men her stepfather sold her to and birthed her first son in the basement of her stepfather's house when she was fourteen. Marie was placed in foster and group homes, only to flee to the streets where she felt safer than home. Yet, life on the street was dangerous and difficult and Marie fell victim to a pimp. One night, Marie got in the car with a violent buyer. In self-defense, she stabbed the man with a small knife she carried for protection. She spent six years in prison for the murder of that violent buyer before coming to work at Shared Hope International.

PROVISIONS OF THE BILLS:

- **SB 5669** removes a barrier to prosecuting child sex trafficking crimes by amending the trafficking law to eliminate the requirement that force, fraud or coercion be proven when the victim is a minor, joining 32 other states and the federal government, and aligns Washington's trafficking law with the federal law by using a reckless disregard standard in proving a defendant's knowledge that a minor victim was under 18.
- **SB 5669** addresses demand for sex trafficking by including buying or purchasing as prohibited conduct under the trafficking law.
- **SB 5669** limits the need to rely on victim-witness testimony by expressly prohibiting a defense based on a minor's consent to engage in commercial sex acts, recognizing that minors cannot consent to commercial sex acts. **SB 5669** protects trafficking victims who testify at trial from traumatizing cross-examination by extending the protection of the rape shield law and expanding the law permitting testimony by closed circuit television to include minors under 14 who are victims of sex trafficking or sexual exploitation.

- **SB 5669** increases deterrence and helps to pay for the costs stemming from trafficking victimization by raising the mandatory fee in a trafficking sentence to \$10,000.
- **SB 5669** requires defendants convicted of trafficking, commercial sexual abuse of a minor and promoting travel for commercial sexual abuse of a minor to register as a sex offender.
- **SB 5669** provides prosecutors and law enforcement with a critical tool for combatting gangs and sex trafficking enterprises by amending the state racketeering law to include trafficking, promoting travel for commercial sexual abuse of a minor and permitting commercial sexual abuse of a minor as predicate crimes.
- **SB 5669** addresses the pervasive use of the Internet to purchase, promote and advertise commercial sexual exploitation of children by amending the offense of communication with a minor for immoral purposes to include use of the Internet for “the purchase or sale of commercial sex acts and sex trafficking.”
- **SB 5488** imposes an additional \$5,000 fine when an Internet advertisement facilitates commercial sexual abuse of a minor, promoting commercial sexual abuse of a minor or promoting travel for commercial sexual abuse of a minor.

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: <http://sharedhope.org/what-we-do/bring-justice/state-by-state-grades/>

For media convenience, a variety of video clips and resources, including DMST survivor comments, are available at this location: <http://sharedhope.org/media/>

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, restore, and bring justice. For more information about Shared Hope International, and the Protected Innocence Challenge, go to www.sharedhope.org

*For more information contact **Taryn Mastrean** at (602) 818-3955 or taryn@sharedhope.org.*

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