

Connecticut Commission on
Women, Children *and* Seniors



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Today, in honor of National Human Trafficking Awareness Day, the Connecticut Trafficking in Persons Council (TIP) is releasing its Annual Report (PDF attached and link here: https://ctcwcs.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/tip-council_2016-annual-report.pdf)

HARTFORD – For too long, the onus for the crime of prostitution has fallen on the prostitute, not the buyer of sex. The Connecticut Trafficking in Persons Council (TIP) is changing that. Recognizing that the sex industry – especially when it involves underage children – is a form of human trafficking, TIP is making several legislative recommendations this session aimed at going after “the demand side” – the buyers of sex.

“Conversations about sex trafficking almost exclusively disregard the role of the individual buying sex—the ‘john,’” says Jillian Gilchrest, chair of Connecticut’s Trafficking in Persons Council and Director of Health Professional Outreach at the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence. “The sex trafficking of Connecticut’s women, men, and children is driven by demand for the commercial sex acts they perform. Put simply, without ‘buyers’ to purchase sex there would be no sex-for-pay industry. So, we are embarking on an ‘End Demand’ campaign to bring much needed attention to those buying sex who create the demand that fuels sex trafficking.”

(“End Demand” Campaign Link here: <http://www.enddemandct.org/>)

Tammy Sneed, Director of Gender Responsive Adolescent Services at Department of Children and Families and co-chair of DCF’s Human Anti-Trafficking Response Team, said: “Reports of children suspected to be victims of domestic minor sex trafficking are increasing every year -- and, in 2016, there were just under 200 such referrals. For every child victim, the number of buyers on a given day in Connecticut is unfathomable. Some children report 10 to 15 buyers per night, which leads us to estimate that a minimum of 2,000 buyers in Connecticut bought sex from children last year.”

Some highlights of the report are:

- The TIP report questions why, since Connecticut enacted the felony crime of patronizing sex from a minor in 2013, there have been no arrests or convictions for the felony. Significantly, DCF has seen an increase in the trafficking of children; currently, there are 456 referrals for children at high risk of trafficking.
- Law enforcement and State’s prosecutors argue that those buying sex with children and exploited adults can be charged with other crimes, such as sexual assault in the second degree or risk of injury. The Council will be looking into this to better understand if buyers of sex are being arrested, and if not, why?
- Connecticut lawmakers, state agencies, and advocates need to work together to better understand the demand side of sex trafficking in order to effectively prevent this crime from happening. This begins with creating awareness, since more often than not, those buying sex are left out of conversations about human trafficking. With the use of social media, traditional media, and advertising, the TIP Council hopes to raise public awareness about the individuals in our state who choose to pay to sexually abuse children and exploited individuals.

Another perspective on why it’s vital to go after the demand side comes from the Alliance to End Sexual Violence (formerly CONNSACS).

“Demand keeps sexual exploitation and trafficking profitable,” says Beth Hamilton, associate director of the Alliance. “We’ve started seeing the criminal justice system hold traffickers responsible, but we do not often see the people who purchase sex being held accountable for their role in keeping the industry thriving. If we want to end commercial sexual exploitation, we need to focus on ending demand and creating survivor-centered services.”

Key Policy Recommendations of the report include:

- Recommend that the Connecticut Sentencing Commission, Special Committee on Sex Offender, Subcommittee on Sex Offender Sentencing consider whether to include *53a-192a*, Trafficking in persons and *53a-83(c)*, Patronizing a prostitute when such other person is under the age of 18, to the Registration of Sex Offender statutes;
- Recommend further discussion and inquiry on why there have not been any convictions under *Sec. 53a-83(c)*, Patronizing a prostitute under the age of 18, effective 2013;
- Recommend further discussion on increasing the penalty for *Sec. 53a-83(c)*, patronizing a prostitute under the age of 18, to align with similar sexual crimes against children; and
- Recommend further discussion on revising *Sec. 53a-192a*, Trafficking in persons, to include recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act and increasing penalties to recognize the severity of the crime.

