



Assembly Member **SANDRÉ SWANSON**
News Release

For Immediate Release:

April 1, 2009

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Assemblymember Swanson Pursues Strike For The Sexual Exploitation of Children - AB 16 Clears Key Assembly Committee

(Sacramento) - Assemblymember Sandré R. Swanson (D-Alameda) continued his fight to protect sexually exploited children from pimps and human traffickers with AB 16, the Human Trafficking Accountability Act, another in a series of bills he has introduced to combat the human trafficking of minors.

AB16 passed the Assembly Public Safety Committee on a unanimous bipartisan vote yesterday with significant support from law enforcement, community and victims support organizations. AB 16 would make any conviction for human trafficking subject to the "Three Strikes Law".

"Children are our most precious asset and we must do everything in our power to protect them from predators that would prey on them for profit. We should have no sympathy and zero tolerance for these criminals who traffic and profit in child prostitution and pornography by forcing minors as young as 12 years old to commit illicit sex acts," said Assemblymember Swanson.

AB 16 would add the crime of human trafficking, including the sexual exploitation of children under the age of 18, to the list of serious and violent felonies subject to sentencing under the provisions of the "Three Strikes Law".

"This law is necessary to send a strong signal that the crimes associated with trafficking minors for sexual exploitation will lead to serious repercussions. The trafficking of minors for prostitution is a growing national problem that we must address. I have been called to consult with numerous cities throughout the nation, most recently Georgia, on the best practices to stop this growing problem." said Sharmin Bock, the Alameda Deputy District Attorney in charge of a special human trafficking prosecution unit.

Lieutenant Kevin Wiley of the Oakland Police Department also testified as to the need for the legislation. "This law is worthy of a strike," said Wiley.

Also testifying on behalf of the bill were the parents of a 14 year old sexually exploited minor who was forced into prostitution and exploited by the growing sophisticated use of the internet to market these crimes. Mr. Wayne Wright and Gina Bentley expressed their strong support for the law and need to make the crime of human trafficking a strike.

"Our daughter was held against her will and repeatedly raped with threats of violence and death to her and her family if she did not continue to prostitute," said Mr. Wright.

"This problem is not simply a local problem but a growing state and national one. We agree with Assemblymember Swanson that there must be a zero tolerance mentality in combating this crime," continued Ms. Bentley.

Mr. John Lovell, representing the California Association of Code Enforcement Officers, the Narcotic

Officers' Association, the California Peace Officers and Police Chiefs Associations also stressed the need for this legislation. "The organizations I represent say they are seeing drug dealers expand their criminal operations to include the human trafficking of minors because it is so lucrative," said a supportive Lovell.

Others in support of the bill were: Crime Victims United of California, California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Alameda County Board of Supervisors, Concerned Women for America, San Benito and San Bernardino County Sheriff's Offices.

"I will continue to fight for sexually exploited children who are the victims of a form of modern day slavery. As a community, we need to continue our support for the prosecution of those who would victimize our children for profit and work to eliminate human trafficking as a profitable enterprise," concluded a determined Assemblymember Swanson.

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