



Alliance to End Slavery and
Trafficking
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S. 1823

Strengthening Child Welfare Response to Trafficking of 2013

What does this legislation accomplish?

This bill amends the Social Security Act to require state foster care programs, which receive federal funds under the Social Security Act, to report in their annual plan either on current efforts to address the human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children in their care, or on their future plans to address the issue. It also mandates data collection on the issue of human trafficking.

Additionally, the bill requires the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to develop and publish: (1) best practices for training of child welfare and court employees on identifying all forms of child trafficking; (2) recommendations for how state welfare agencies can prevent human trafficking and can engage in efforts to serve youth who are trafficked; (3) protocols for effective cross-collaboration between state agencies and non-governmental services; and (4) best practices to establish safe residential placement for trafficked youth. The Department of Health and Human Services will also be required to submit a report to Congress 18 months from the date of enactment of the bill providing a summary of data, practices and protocols, and evaluations of methods.

Why should your office support S. 1823?

1. The information identified by this reporting requirement will help child welfare officials meet their child protection goals and prevent future abuse by encouraging better identification of trafficked children, greater understanding of their specialized support and services needs, as well as earlier identification of cases.
2. This legislation is low-cost because it utilizes existing resources and reporting frameworks.
3. Asking the Department of Health and Human Services to publish enhanced guidance in this area will work toward ensuring more uniform and cost-effective implementation at the state level.
4. This bill was introduced with bipartisan support, sponsored by Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) and Senator Kay Hagan (D-NC).
5. A study conducted in New York State shows that more than 85% of identified commercially sexually exploited children in New York State had prior child welfare involvement. Full report available at: <http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/reports/csec-2007.pdf>

Please co-sponsor S. 1823

For additional information please contact Melysa Sperber, ATEST Director, at msperber@humanityunited.org.

Case Examples for S. 1823

Keisha was born in the United States. As a baby, her mother left her outside a dumpster by the hospital and she bounced around in foster care programs, suffering sexual abuse at the age of 7. At the age of 12, a pimp offered her a ride in his car, got her high on drugs, and then forcibly raped her and sent her to work that night on the street. Keisha continued to bounce from pimp to pimp until she was 17 years old and sent to juvenile detention.

Mary was 13 years old when she came from Central Africa to stay with a family member who promised her an education in the United States. Instead she was forced to cook, clean, and take care of the other small children in the family 24 hours a day. She was not allowed to go to school, and was physically and verbally abused. She escaped with the help of a good Samaritan when she was 17. She and her family received repeated threats from her trafficker after her escape and during the criminal case. Mary stayed temporarily in the home of a local NGO case manager because there were no safe shelter options available to her. Eventually, she was placed in the foster care system but had to move twice. She reported feeling alone and scared and that no one in this system understood what happened to her.

Maria, a 14-year old from Mexico, was promised a job as a nanny in the United States. Instead, when she arrived in the United States she was forced into prostitution through beatings and threats and raped repeatedly by her traffickers. After being discovered by the FBI and freed from her traffickers, she was placed in a foster care program. A case was brought against her traffickers in federal court. By the time the court case ended three years later, Maria had lived with seven different foster care families who struggled to understand her needs and trauma.

Christina was twelve years old when she first came to a homeless youth drop-in center. Her mother was mentally ill. Christina reported to the center's counselors that her mother's boyfriend was physically abusive toward her mother, her brothers, and herself. The counselors called child welfare to report the suspected abuse. Christina and her siblings were removed from her mother's care and all placed in different foster homes and group homes. Christina and her older siblings all ran away and returned to their mother. They reported that they did not feel safe or supported in the group homes and that the environments of the group homes were closer to a jail than a home. Even though the city knew where the mother lived, no child welfare worker ever went to see if the runaway siblings were staying there. While staying with her mentally ill mother, an adult couple recruited Christina into prostitution for over two years.

David, a United States citizen, was thirteen years old when his mother died. After his mother's death he often spent time on the street, met older homeless youth, and sometimes exchanged sex for money and other survival needs. He experienced a lot of violence while homeless on the street and was picked up by child welfare and placed in a group home. He reported that one of the group home staff members harassed, threatened, and even hit him all in relation to his perceived sexuality. David did not feel safe at the group home so he ran away. He returned to prostitution when he was desperate for money but hated himself for doing so. He also continues to struggle with his sexual identity.