



Senate of Pennsylvania

July 23, 2012

TO: ALL SENATORS

FROM: Stewart J. Greenleaf *Stewart*

SUBJECT: Cosponsorship – **Human Trafficking**

In 2010 I introduced and the Senate adopted Senate Resolution 253 directing the Joint State Government Commission to establish an advisory committee to study the problem of human trafficking. The Advisory Committee was established and was comprised of “29 individuals from across Pennsylvania, representing federal, state and local government agencies, victim service providers, law enforcement, prosecutors, academics and advocates.” In June the Advisory Committee issued its report entitled “Human Trafficking in Pennsylvania: Policy Recommendations and Proposed Legislation.” As the prime sponsor of Senate Resolution 253, I am introducing the proposed legislation.

While Pennsylvania currently has a criminal statute on “trafficking of persons,” there has only been one conviction under the statute (18 Pa.C.S. Ch. 30). According to the report, “The Advisory Committee believed that current state law should be improved as it contains vague definitions and lacks the teeth necessary for the law enforcement community to more effectively arrest and prosecute criminals (who are usually charged with other crimes or allowed to plea bargain to lesser charges). The law should be strengthened to provide the tools necessary to make convictions possible and penalties more stringent to give prosecutors more leverage in handling cases.”

The legislation I am introducing focuses on “more clearly defining sex and labor trafficking, increasing the fines and penalties for trafficking and involuntary servitude, adding penalties for business entities, including license revocation and forfeiture of contracts, implementing participation in the national human trafficking hotline, creating the Pennsylvania Council for the Prevention of Human Trafficking, increasing training for first responders, and expanding resources available to victim service providers.”

According to the report, the “Polaris Project, which receives calls to the National Human Trafficking hotline, has seen a steady increase in reporting over the last five years with over 19,000 calls in 2011. The United Nations estimates 2.5 million people worldwide are subject to forced labor or sexual exploitation, including 1.2 million children, while 161 nations are a source, pass-through or destination for trafficking victims.”

While human trafficking is a global issue, Pennsylvania is a part of the human trafficking network. “Pennsylvania has primarily been described as a ‘pass-through state,’ with its interstate highway system, truck stops and transient truckers. However, evidence suggests that it is also a ‘source’ (victims originate in the Commonwealth) and a ‘destination’ (victims are brought to the Commonwealth to be exploited).”

The Advisory Committee’s report concludes that “While the crime of human trafficking is not in its infancy, combating the crime at the state level is new. Numerous reforms, and specifically the proposed legislation contained in this report, will help accelerate efforts to combat human trafficking, put perpetrators on notice, and will demonstrate to the nation and the world that Pennsylvania takes human trafficking very seriously and is working hard to fight this crime within its borders.”

If you would like to cosponsor this legislation, please contact Pat Snively of my office by e-mailing her at psnively@pasen.gov.