

Statement by
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Co-Chair Arizona Governor's Task Force on Human
Trafficking
Before the
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related
Agencies
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I'd like to thank Congressman Frank Wolf for inviting me to be here today and also thank all of you on this committee for bringing greater attention to human trafficking in the United States by holding this hearing. I am encouraged by the increased attention to human trafficking solutions that I am seeing in Arizona, across the nation and internationally. I am encouraged, but there is a great deal to be done and it's going to take all of us working together to raise awareness and fight to end this modern-day slavery.

I've been a life-long humanitarian and when I was introduced to human trafficking, I was sickened and immediately wanted to do all I could to help end it. I was traveling in India and was in a shop buying Sari material for my daughter. I heard clattering and clacking beneath the floorboards and looked down to see several sets of little eyes peering up at me. The shop owner told me they were his children and not to worry. Only later, did I realize I was likely looking at a group of trafficked children. I've been haunted by that scene and that I left without doing anything. I vowed to myself, I would do all I could going forward to help other victims of human trafficking.

The estimates on the numbers of trafficked persons are horrifying, but just as horrifying is each survivor's story and the realization that there were likely many people along their path that could have done something to help and didn't. It is all of our responsibility as citizens to pay attention and act when something is clearly wrong.

According to a 2011 FBI report on trafficking about 293,000 U.S. children are at risk of being exploited and trafficked for sex. The average age for a girl to be trafficked is 13. Ambassador Luis CdeBaca, Ambassador at Large of the State Department's office to Monitor and combat Trafficking in Persons recently estimated that 27 million men, women and children are victimized worldwide.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) estimates that 1 in 7 runaways reported to them in 2013 were likely sex trafficking victims. NCMEC also estimates that a pimp can make \$150,00-\$200,000 per child each year and the average pimp has 4-6 girls. It is a low risk and very high reward business. Drugs or weapons are sold once, human beings can be sold over and over again and many times in one day.

I am thrilled when there is progress such as in a recent FBI operation in July 2013 when 105 commercially sexually exploited children were recovered and 150 pimps and other involved in trafficking were arrested.

Over 1300 officers have been trained through NCMEC, and while that is a great start, there is a need for many more law enforcement officers specifically trained to handle trafficking.

Through my role as co-chair of Arizona's Task Force on Human Trafficking and with a partnership between The

McCain Institute for International Leadership and Polaris Project that seeks to strengthen anti-trafficking legislation in Arizona and the greater Mountain States, I'm witnessing firsthand just how important it is that we work with local, state, and national stakeholders to effectively combat human trafficking.

The task force heard recommendations from many who have been involved in the fight against human trafficking for years and presented 27 specific recommendations to our Governor. I am pleased to say that legislation is pending in the Arizona legislature that toughens the sentencing structure for traffickers, adds sex and labor trafficking to the list of acts that constitute racketeering, increases penalties if the victim is taken from foster care or a shelter situation and requires an escort service to include their license number in any ad as well as to keep on file proof of the age of anyone depicted in the ad. In addition, our recommendations regarding specific human trafficking training for first responders and changes to administrative practice to increase protection for these vulnerable victims are being implemented in my home state.

I've also been involved in working with Clear Channel and The Polaris Project to advertise the National Human Trafficking hotline number on 50 digital billboards throughout metropolitan Phoenix for all of 2014. Clear Channel has donated the billboards which flash the hotline number on 15 displays at a time and during any 4 week period in the campaign, 27 million people will see the hotline number. Our hope is that someone who needs help will be able to get it through this public awareness campaign.

In a recent study funded by the McCain Institute which will be released in early March 2014, we endeavored to explore

the impact of a large sporting event such as the Super Bowl using scientific research from Arizona State University and powerful analytics from Praescient Analytics.

Preliminary findings are disturbing. Through the analysis of online prostitution ads on Backpage.com in North New Jersey and local cities (Manhattan, Staten Island and Brooklyn), we found thousands of ads advertising sex. Of the ads that were searched, nearly 1000 ads (listing the ages of 18-20), 96.8% (954) for were for prostitution, of those, our analysts suspect that 83.7% (826) of them were being sex trafficked.

This was based on a new tool, a Sex Trafficking Matrix created by researchers in partnership with law enforcement experts, being developed to assist in the flagging of sex trafficked minors and adults in online ad venues.

In North Jersey and New York, 50 ads (5.1%) were flagged as potential trafficked minors. This percent may appear to be small but if you apply it across the thousands of ads posted each day in the US, this is a national tragedy.

Nearly 75% of the phone numbers used in the flagged minor sex ad were linked to another girl or woman indicating some sort of network or organization of trafficking.

The movement of girls for the Super Bowl was obvious as our research found that 20% of the ads had been placed in other cities before and/or after the Super Bowl.

- One ad was linked to ads prior to the Super Bowl week that went from 1) Boston, MA; 2) Worcester, MA; 3) North Jersey, NJ.; 4) South Jersey, NJ.; 5) Richmond, VA; and then to Manhattan, NY but on

Super Bowl Sunday was listed in an online sex ad in Boston, MA.

- Another ad was linked to prior ads in North Bay California (San Jose, San Francisco Bay area) and then to North Jersey during Super Bowl week and then back to Oakland/San Francisco, CA within a week after the Super Bowl.

Networks include gangs which have become increasingly a part of the sex trafficking of minors in the country as well as small organized sex trafficking groups. This research shows that sex trafficking as a part of a network was found in three quarters of these ads.

What we learned from this study so far includes:

1. The networks and circuits that facilitate the victimization of minors in sex trafficking are more pervasive than previously known. The average ad was linked to 3.5 other girls/women, one case had up to 11 girls/women linked by a criminal network.
2. These networks keep these victims on the move perhaps to avoid law enforcement detection but more likely, to find new customers. It is unlikely that they are avoiding law enforcement as there simply are not enough law enforcement eyes on this issue. How could any law enforcement unit in this country search thousands of ads, follow 50 potential leads, follow the networks and the dozens of phone numbers and photos associated.
3. We need to: create a national training for law enforcement specific to the complexities of sex trafficking; support the hiring and specialization of

new law enforcement units around the country and create a national tool that assists law enforcement in the tracking of traffickers and allows intelligence from one community to transfer to another and not be lost after the trafficker leaves the area.

Thank you for inviting me to testify today. I applaud the work of this committee on human trafficking. It is a critical time and an opportunity for all of us to work together to give a voice to the voiceless.