

United States House of Representatives
Committee on the Judiciary
Subcommittee on Crime and Federal Government Surveillance

WRITTEN TESTIMONY BY

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Survivor Advisory Board

For a Hearing Entitled: Children are Not for Sale: Examining the Threat of
Exploitation of Children in the U.S. and Abroad

Wednesday, September 13th, 2023

Dear Chairman Biggs, Ranking Member Jackson Lee, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee.

My name is Cristian Eduardo. I am a survivor of international and domestic sex and labor trafficking. I am a Latino immigrant, a member of the LGBTQ+ community, a person living with HIV, and a human being dealing with the life-long consequences of human trafficking.

It is vital to understand Human Trafficking and tackle any misinformation, this why I want to highlight that smuggling and human trafficking are two different crimes. If we want to protect unaccompanied immigrants minor who are fleeing from their country of origin due to gang violence, war, and natural disasters we must train and educate all those who are interacting with these children (including Customs and Border Patrol) before they are sent to refuge camps/ shelters or any other state agency. The lack of a proper tool for screening drives to the creation of mythological harmful narratives that smuggling equals human trafficking and federal entities have the obligation to fight against this. Misinformation is one of the main tools that traffickers use to lure victims and exploit them when most vulnerable.

As a national Survivor Leader, what I am seeing on a national level, unfortunately the anti-trafficking movement has been moving away from advocating for a focus on demand reduction in order to prevent human trafficking. This is I believe, in part, due to the privileged communities to which sex buyers belong.

Sex buyers are the ones incentivizing and creating an environment for sex trafficking to exist as they are the ones creating demand. Sex buyers are the ones that are commodifying us (victims and survivors); they don't care if someone is underage, if someone is living with HIV, syphilis, chlamydia. As a result of being trafficked and abused, I have had to navigate the difficulty of living with HIV.

