

Statement by Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney  
Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security  
Robert C. “Bobby” Scott, Chairman and Louie Gohmert, Ranking Republican Member  
Hearing on “Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking”  
1:00 p.m. - Wednesday, September 15, 2010  
2141 Rayburn House Office Building

I’d like to thank Chairman Scott and Ranking Member Gohmert for their leadership on this very important issue and thank today’s witnesses, many of whom have been on the front line battling this extremely devastating problem that is found right in our own backyards.

As co-chair of the Human Trafficking Caucus, I have been working in a bipartisan manner on these issues with Representative Chris Smith and others for many years.

Today’s hearing is a perfect opportunity to educate people about the reality of the trade in human lives and work toward its elimination. To be clear, trafficking is the slavery of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Human trafficking is a \$10 billion worldwide industry. It is the third largest organized crime ring in history, preceded only by drugs and guns. But unlike drugs and guns which can be sold only once, the human body can be sold over and over again.

Too many people believe that child sex trafficking is a problem only in foreign countries. But experts estimate that a minimum of 100,000 children in the United States—most of whom are American citizens—are exploited through commercial sex every year.

Although it is hard to believe, the average age of first exploitation is 12-13 years old.

These are our daughters, their schoolmates, and their friends.

In fact, this past June, in Brooklyn, eight people were indicted on charges they forced girls as young as 15 into prostitution. The girls were recruited from local middle and high schools. They were threatened with violence and kept out of contact from family and friends.

Despite the need, a Congressional Research Service report that I requested, found that funding for specialized services and support for victims of domestic minor sex trafficking are extremely limited.

Throughout the country, organizations specializing in sex trafficking collectively have *fewer than 50 beds*, to address the needs of the estimated 100,000 victims each year. This is simply unacceptable.

After hearing from former victims, seasoned cops, and hard-hitting prosecutors about the horrors of domestic minor sex trafficking, I knew something needed to be done.

That is why I, along with Rep. Smith and working with Senator Ron Wyden's office, introduced HR 5575, **the Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Deterrence and Victims Support Act of 2010**.

This bill takes a multi-disciplinary, cooperative approach to shutting down child sex trafficking in the United States and offer rehabilitation for its survivors.

Through a series of block grants, the bill would provide shelter and care for victims, including specialized counseling, clothing and other daily needs in order to keep victims from returning to the street. It creates a comprehensive, victim-centered approach to addressing the sex trafficking of minors.

It also aims to ensure adequate resources for law enforcement and prosecutors to rescue victims and put pimps behind bars. Importantly, the legislation will strengthen deterrence and prevention programs aimed at potential buyers.

HR 5575 provides funding to implement improvements to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) which tracks information about missing and exploited children with the goal of identifying those children who are at high risk for sex trafficking and providing a more protective response.

It will focus exclusively on minor victims and increase the share of funding available for shelters. Lack of appropriate shelters often force law enforcement to send victims to juvenile detention facilities where there is no access to appropriate services or release them, knowing that they will likely end up back in the hands of their pimps.

In July, the Human Trafficking Caucus along with the Victim's Rights Caucus hosted a briefing on domestic sex trafficking of minors where National Center for Missing and Exploited Children President and CEO Ernie Allen, who is testifying today, addressed the shift of sexual exploitation from the streets to Craigslist and other online venues, where children are marketed for sex.

The Internet has changed the way human trafficking and sex slavery operates, but in a showing of leadership, Craigslist announced that it is shutting down its Adult Services Section from its website in the United States.

I look forward to hearing from both Ernie Allen and representatives from Craigslist as we work together to eradicate this violence and protect our most vulnerable citizens. In particular, I hope

we will hear from Craigslist today if they will be shutting down the “erotic” pages in the more than 250 cities that still feature this section.

We can no longer ignore that children in our country are being so horrifically exploited for economic gain.

We have a moral obligation to help the neglected victims of sex trafficking and to crack down on their abusers.

Thank you for this opportunity and thank you to all of the witnesses today.