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May 25, 2015

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RE: HB 369 – Human Trafficking

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Dear Governor Scott,

Beatriz Baldan
3Ci, Inc.

On behalf of Florida Foster Care Review, I write to ask you to please sign House Bill 369, requiring the posting of the National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline in key locations throughout the state. We are very glad that the Florida Legislature passed this bipartisan proposal and that the bill has made it to your desk for signature. The legislation takes a significant and meaningful step to reduce human trafficking. In so doing, it will save lives, including the lives of many young people.

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Florida Foster Care Review (FFCR) works to promote the safety, well-being and long-term success of abused and neglected children. Unfortunately, the overlap between trafficking and child-maltreatment is inarguable. Ninety-five percent of teens who are prostituted were victims of prior sexual abuse by either family members or close acquaintances. The risk of being trafficked is also linked to homelessness. According to 2014 Congressional testimony, the number of 10- to 17-year-olds trafficked in the commercial sex trade likely exceeds 250,000, with 60 percent being runaway, thrown-away or homeless youth. Sadly, 11 to 37 percent of youth nationwide who “age out” of foster care become homeless soon thereafter.

Emme Pedinielli
Advocate

Because children, youth and young adults in or recently out of foster care are among those at highest risk of being trafficked, FFCR advocated throughout the 2015 legislative session for passage of this bill. Posting the Hotline in transportation locations, emergency rooms, strip clubs and massage parlors (not owned by health care professionals) will help law enforcement to find and rescue victims and prevent future incidents by allowing people to anonymously report suspect activity. The Hotline is toll-free and operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in over 200 languages. Twenty-five states have passed similar legislation; adding Florida to the list is important because trafficking is by nature a crime in which victims are moved to various locations state- and nationwide.

Ileana Portal
U.S. Century Bank

Michelle Weber
Bilzin Sumberg

Julie A. Wood
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Candice L. Maze, JD
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In the Legislature, this proposal enjoyed strong bipartisan support and was thoroughly vetted and ultimately passed unanimously by both houses. We hope you will sign it as soon as possible. We would be grateful if you could notify us when it has been signed, so that we can let our supporters know that Florida has taken another important step to end trafficking and protect vulnerable children and youth.

Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at 305-772-0708 or cmaze@fostercarereview.org if you have questions or would like to discuss this further. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Candice L. Maze". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C" and a long, sweeping tail.

Executive Director
Florida Foster Care Review