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DATE: March 7, 2022

Senator Shannon Grove
1021 N Street, Room 7150
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senator Grove:

I write in support of your legislation, SB 1042. This important bill will include human trafficking in the lists of crimes that are defined as “serious” and “violent” under California law, making the crime a strike under the Three Strikes law. California has the notorious distinction of being one of the nation’s top destinations for human trafficking and California consistently ranks number one in the nation in the number of human trafficking cases reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline.

The California Attorney General notes that California is one of the largest sites for human trafficking in the United States, recognizes the serious nature of this crime, and has defined it as “modern day slavery.” The Attorney General has also noted that Human trafficking is among the world’s fastest growing criminal enterprises and is estimated to be a \$150 billion-a-year global industry that profits off the exploitation of our most vulnerable populations.

California law plays a pivotal role in the ability to combat human trafficking and prevent repeat offenders from continuously enslaving additional victims. Under current California law, human trafficking is not listed as a “serious” or “violent” crime, putting it in the same category as other non-serious and non-violent felonies such as vandalism and theft. The horrific reality is that human trafficking is anything but non-serious and non-violent.

Sex trafficking victims are forced to have sex with upwards of fifteen men a day and hundreds of strangers in a year. Children as young as 11-12 years-old are trafficked across California every day. Trafficking victims are not permitted to eat, sleep, rest, or receive other basic life necessities until they meet the daily demands of their traffickers. Every aspect of their life is controlled by the trafficker and victims are forced to live in an isolated world where terror and abuse reign. Trafficking victims are considered property of the trafficker to be used and abused at the trafficker’s will. Many trafficking victims are branded like cattle and forced to get their trafficker’s name tattooed on their face or body, relegating trafficking victims to the status of mere property.

Labor trafficking is no less insidious, as victims of labor trafficking are forced to work long hours in unsanitary and inhumane working conditions for little or no pay. Labor traffickers will often tell their victims they will not be believed if they try to report the crime and the authorities will deport them. Like sex traffickers, labor traffickers maintain total control over their victims by using a combination of physical abuse and psychological manipulation.

SB 1042 will give a voice to the millions of victims that have suffered from this horrific abuse. This bill will fight to protect victims, strengthen prevention, and increase the prosecution of those who buy and sell human beings. It is about time that California starts to prosecute these horrendous acts as serious and violent crimes.

For all the reasons stated above, I support SB 1042.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cynthia Zimmer".

Cynthia Zimmer

Kern County District Attorney