

Testimony of Cheryl Briggs

for combating human trafficking in our cities

House Committee on Homeland Security hearing

As a survivor of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST), I feel I have a unique insight on the victimization and rehabilitation process that non-survivors may not have. From this standpoint, I know the specialized services a victim needs to transform to survivor.

The proposed Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, currently in congress seeks to clarify portions of the Trafficked Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in changing the definition of trafficking to include solicitation by buyers of trafficking victims. It also creates a Domestic Trafficking Victims Fund (DTVf) and allows domestic victims to obtain certification as a victim of severe human trafficking and thereby, providing a victim quicker access to funds and services. This fund will increase federal resources for domestic trafficking victims up to \$30 million per year, among many other important points.

While there have been recommended Best Practices developed for DMST, there are no required minimal standards of care. While the majority of residential treatment programs for minors are licensed by the Health and Human Services Commission, this in no way qualifies the facility for offering trafficking services. I feel that it is of utmost importance that minimal standards be developed and required for any agency receiving federal or state funding. This population especially minors are very vulnerable to manipulation, exploitation and are at great risk of re-victimization by agencies that want to help that are not qualified to do so. We have an obligation to protect the most vulnerable in our society and assure that services provided are adequate, sufficient, and timely.

The final point I would like to make is human trafficking, like any other industry, runs on an economics of supply and demand. It has been proven through studies by Dr. Melissa Farley of the Prostitution and Research Center in San Francisco, through a study in Sweden, that providing prostituted women with services and prosecuting "johns", decreased the number of trafficking victims by half. If we focus not only on the criminal enterprises in which trafficking occurs but the purchasers of the victims themselves, we would greatly reduce the supply. If through fear of public shame and/or increased prosecution of statutes," johns" became afraid, that would create less demand which would automatically reflect in a decrease supply.