



**Testimony of
Commissioner Joette Katz
State of Connecticut
Department of Children and Families
U.S. Senate Finance Committee
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Chairman Baucus, Ranking Member Hatch, and distinguished Members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Joette Katz and I am the Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF). I would like to share with the Committee some of the efforts that the State of Connecticut has undertaken to address the issue of domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST) and its impact on our children. First, it is important to provide an important backdrop.

Although much attention has been paid to these human rights violations in other countries, it is perhaps less widely known that child trafficking is occurring in the United States at an alarming rate. The United States Department of Justice estimates that 200,000 American children are potentially trafficked each year into the sex trade. The United States Department of State "*Trafficking in Persons Report 2010*" found that the majority of domestic victims enslaved in the sex industry are runaway and homeless youth. Nationally, 450,000 children run away from home each year. One of every three teens on the street will be lured toward prostitution within 48 hours of leaving home. This means at least 150,000 children are lured into prostitution each year. The average age of children victimized by pornography and prostitution in the United States is 12 years old.¹ Data shows that children who are involved with child welfare services, specifically, in the foster care system, are at a much higher risk of being trafficked into the sex trade.

The DCF is one of the nation's few agencies to offer child protection, behavioral health, juvenile justice and prevention services under the umbrella of a single Department. Accordingly, whether children are abused, neglected, involved in the juvenile justice system, or experience

¹ *National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children/NISMART-2.*

emotional, mental health or substance abuse issues, the Department can respond to these children in a way that draws upon community and state resources to help.

Over the past few years, we have seen a dramatic increase in the trafficking of minors in Connecticut. Human Trafficking is the third most profitable criminal industry in the world, generating an estimated \$32 billion per year.² The reaction of moral outrage that is prompted in the face of such child victimization has fueled considerable work here at the Department to galvanize a system wide collaborative effort necessary to identify and combat it.

Since 2008, when collaborative efforts in Connecticut significantly increased -- both internally at the Department and externally with the community -- there have been approximately 130 children who have been identified and confirmed as victims of DMST. Of those victims identified, ***ninety-eight percent*** have been involved with child welfare services in some manner, and many of these children have been victimized while legally in the care and custody of the Department.

To address the problem, over the past two years, the Department has been collaborating with local, state and federal law enforcement to better coordinate our response, particularly as it relates to the children in our child welfare system. We have found that the most significant barriers have been the identification of minor victims, development of appropriate responses and enforcement of the laws leading to the arrest and prosecution of persons responsible for these crimes.

Identification and Response

Identification of minor victims could not be accomplished without a statewide training initiative that incorporated the definition of the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) and the evolving state legislation that has been modeled by other jurisdictions throughout the country. Most importantly, identification and response requires raising the awareness of the children and youth themselves who are being victimized by trafficking. The ultimate goal of the

² ILO, *A global alliance against forced labor: 2005*.

trainings is to change the lens through which we viewed these most vulnerable youth from "prostitute" to "victim," or "survivor," as the girls would describe themselves.

The statewide training initiative has rolled out in various stages over the last several years. To date, the DCF Training Academy has provided two full days of training to hundreds of Department employees on the issues of DMST with thirty trainers from the Department who are available to conduct an abbreviated version. Training sessions have occurred across the state for parole and probation officers, private providers, police, emergency medical services, hospitals and emergency departments, schools, and various other community entities, among others. In addition, the Department offers a two-hour certified training on DMST to police officers from around the state through Connecticut's Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POST). To date, hundreds of officers have been trained.

The Department's CARELINE, our twenty-four hour intake and information center, was at the forefront of this initiative ensuring that any potential case involving a minor be reviewed despite the lack of legal mandate. The Department protocol has evolved over the years and now our CARELINE accepts *all* cases of DMST regardless of whether the alleged perpetrator is the "entrusted" caregiver.

State Legislative Activity

The Department also continues to advocate for more robust legislation to combat DMST. In recent years, the Connecticut General Assembly has passed several acts³ regarding DMST, including legislation that ensures law enforcement refer minor victims to the Department rather than arrest any exploited youth for prostitution. In response to this act, the DCF CARELINE implemented a designated call-in number for law enforcement to improve the Department's response times to police officers as well as any potential victims in need of

³ *Connecticut General Assembly, Public Act 10-112, An Act Concerning the Forfeiture of Money and Property Related to Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking, the Possession of Child Pornography and the Siting of Residential Sexual Offender Treatment Facilities; Public Act 11-180, An Act Concerning Notification by the Department of Children and Families When a Youth is Arrested for Prostitution and Out-of-State Placements of Children and Youth; and Public Act 12-141, An Act Concerning Commercial Sexual Exploitation of a Minor.*

services. This past weekend, our state legislature approved a bill⁴ that provides a comprehensive response to address the issue of sexual exploitation and human trafficking by enhancing criminal penalties for the purchase and trafficking of minors, protecting child victims and adopting a criminal justice framework for investigation and prosecution.

Interagency Collaboration

To further assist with the development of a comprehensive and systemic response, an interagency team was established and is known now as the Human Anti-Trafficking Response Team (HART). The HART team, lead by the Department, is a multidisciplinary collaboration including staff from the Department, private providers and the Office of the Victim Advocate. All cases that are called into the CARELINE are reviewed and monitored by a member of the HART team to ensure an appropriate response that includes the provision of services to victims whose cases have not been substantiated. To guarantee that all cases are prosecuted to the fullest extent permitted by federal and state law, the Department collaborates with the FBI and Homeland Security on a regular basis.

Through HART, the Department's response protocol, designed by a DCF psychiatrist, includes new practice guidelines that provide a detailed framework to respond to potential victims. Additionally, the Department's medical team, in collaboration with the private provider network, developed a nursing assessment tool to help identify and treat youth.

Although the Department has not received additional funds, providers across the state who work with minor girls have been trained on the issues of DMST, ensuring competencies at every service level. A "*My Life My Choice*" curriculum⁵ has been offered at various congregate care programs throughout the state and is now being implemented in community based programs. These strategies not only help to prevent youth from being trafficked, but also aid the youth in their self identification.

⁴ Connecticut General Assembly, H.B. No. 5666, An Act Concerning Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking in Persons.

⁵ Training curriculum created by the Justice Resource Institute (JRI) to "develop and strengthen efforts to halt the disturbing wave of exploitation and trafficking in the United States."

Conclusion

While much of our focus in Connecticut has been on the girls, we are equally concerned about the issue of boys and DMST. This issue currently is under review by the Department in collaboration with our private provider network with a primary focus on identification and response. In addition, the Department is finalizing the design of a curriculum for adolescent boys in an effort to deter boys and young men from encouraging and/or engaging in the acts of DMST.

We are proud that we have made considerable progress in increasing awareness of this horrific issue, but we fully understand that we still have work to do in Connecticut to protect our vulnerable children. To help illustrate the magnitude of this problem, attached to my testimony is a brief synopsis of two of our cases. Both children were involved with the child welfare system.

Once again, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to speak today. I'll be happy to answer any questions that Committee members may have.

Laura's Story

Pre-existing Risk Factors:

- DCF Probate involvement 2003 - Guardianship awarded to maternal great aunt due to mother's substance abuse in 2003; but bio mom always remains in contact with Laura and her older sister, Amy.
- In 2007 allegations that mother used the children to deliver "weed (marijuana) bags" and collect money from buyers outside of her home.
- Biological Mother is a convicted felon on drug charges and placed at York Correctional Facility for a period of time sometime in 2008.
- No paternal contact or involvement from age four to age 15 (2011) when Laura visited Puerto Rico and was reintroduced to her biological father.
- DCF involvement from 2006 to 2008 for allegations of physical abuse (hitting with belts, extension cords) physical and emotional neglect by maternal aunt/guardian against Laura and her older sister, Amy.
- 2008 Laura begins exhibiting self-injurious (cutting) behavior and "anger" problems.
- April 2011 Laura begins dating her older sister Ashley's 19 year-old ex-boyfriend, David. David is a known gang member.
- July 2011, Laura begins a series of AWOLs lasting from two days to three weeks.

Initiation into CSE (Events occurred over the course of 2 to 3 years.)

- Sometime before April 2011, sister, Amy begins dating David, a 19 year-old gang member. Shortly after they begin dating, David attempts to coerce Amy into having sex with other boys/men. Amy ends the relationship but tells no one about David's attempts to engage her in sex with others.
- April 2011, Laura begins dating David.
- April 2011 - Pictures are posted on Facebook of Laura engaged in sexual activity with an unidentified young man.
- Bio mom discovers Facebook picture through anonymous tip from sister, Amy. Upon discovery of Facebook pictures, bio mom physically assaults Laura in the presence of her maternal aunt/legal guardian, who does not intervene to protect Laura from being physically disciplined by her biological mother.
- July 2012 -- Laura goes AWOL from the home for the weekend. This is the first AWOL ever.
- August 2012 - Laura AWOLS from the home and is missing for approximately three weeks. She was reported to "look awful as if on drugs" upon return home.
- September 8, 2012 -- Laura goes AWOL again.
- September 11, 2012 -- DCF CARELINE receives reports of suspected sex trafficking and theft. Specifically, Laura returned to the family home from her AWOL on September 8, 2012 and stole a family member's ATM card and ID telling her sister, Amy that she needed the ATM card to access money to give to a man to whom she owed \$300 dollars. Laura left the home again immediately after stealing the ATM card and ID. Subsequently and while on continued AWOL, Laura called family members from a blocked number and reported that she was locked in a room somewhere but didn't

know where she was. She told family members that she was with a man who was selling her to have sex for money and giving her marijuana laced with cocaine, and that the man had tattooed a heart next to her left eye. Laura told family members that there were at least two or three other girls with similar tattoos. Later, while still on AWOL Laura posted to her Facebook account that she was pregnant. Her Facebook account was immediately deactivated after that posting.

- September 24, 2012 -- Laura was found injured after a serious car accident while en route to New York City with her boyfriend David's adult sister. Laura had been ejected from the car during a high speed accident and sustained a traumatic brain injury and severe facial injuries. She was admitted to the intensive care unit of a local hospital.

Outcomes

- Police investigation revealed Laura's captor and trafficker to be David, her gang-member "boyfriend." Police investigation also revealed that Laura was drugged and coerced to participate in armed robberies during her three week/AWOL and captivity and that at the time of the car accident she was most likely being transported to New York City to be trafficked there.
- Following the car accident, Laura was treated and released to her aunt/legal guardian. She continued to AWOL from the home and was placed in detention until discharged to Stepping Stone Residential Treatment where she participated in the *My Life My Choice* program (an education and prevention program for girls at risk of CSE) and received a DCF IE evaluation.
- Laura was discharged from Stepping Stone with a DCF IE recommendation to return home with MDFT, mentoring and individual trauma focused therapy. Since returning home, Laura has had one AWOL and one subsequent short-term admission to Stepping Stone, but has since returned home and is actively engaged in treatment and school.

Jay's Story

Pre-existing Risk Factors:

- Involved with DCF since 1999 for allegations of inadequate supervision, emotional neglect, physical neglect (Conditions injurious to a child) and sexual abuse/exploitation.
- Severe domestic violence (choking, tire slashing) between mother and father.
- Alcohol and drug abuse by mother and father.
- Attempted suicide by father after “misunderstanding” between father and mother (circa May 2002);
- Maternal grandparents addicted to crack cocaine.
- Maternal grandfather arrested for vaginal and oral sexual assault of Jay’s two younger sisters (2005).
- Corporal punishment/physical abuse when Jay and brother try to intervene between parents during incidents of DV.
- Jay smoked marijuana since age 8 when introduced to it by his older (12 y/o brother).

Initiation into CSE (Events occurred over the course of 2 to 3 years.)

- Jay (12 y/o) and older brother (16 y/o) are introduced to male owner of landscaping business by father for yard work.
- After one week Jay's older brother is fired and Jay is kept because Jay “works harder”, according to business owner.
- Jay is treated to dinner at local restaurants and pubs with business owner as a reward for a job well done.
- Business owner "treats" Jay to alcohol during dinner.
- Business owner allows Jay free access to alcohol while on the job.
- Business owner begins inviting Jay and Jay's friends to his home after work.
- Business owner begins using prescription medication, marijuana and alcohol with Jay and Jay's friend's after work and in the business owner's home.
- Business owner begins viewing pornographic videos of male-to-male sex while he and Jay and Jay's friends smoke marijuana and drink alcohol.
- Business owner offers Jay (and Jay's friends) \$600 to pose naked while he (the business owner) masturbates.
- Jay’s sister reports observing Jay and one of the men masturbating while watching porn.
- During investigation, Jay acknowledges that the business owner provided him with marijuana, alcohol, and pornographic videos, and that the business owner offered to pay him to pose naked. However, Jay adamantly denied accepting money or engaging in sexual activity with the business owner, but reported that other boys did in fact receive money or drugs in exchange for sexual activities.