

First of all I want to thank the sponsors of bill HB17- 1172. In the nearly 10 years the Human Trafficking Task Force of Southern Colorado has been in existence we have seen great gains in the fight against human trafficking . There has been a collaborative effort from dedicated citizens, law enforcement officers, prosecuting attorneys, numerous governmental and non-governmental agencies, and the media; public awareness of this crime has increased tremendously as can be seen in reports of suspicious activity to local law enforcement or to our Colorado hotline. We are in a better place than we were 10 years ago.

None of this would have happened without the forward thinking of our state representatives and legislators. In 2013 Colorado received an "F" rating in how our state responds to human trafficking. Our laws to prosecute the perpetrators of this, the fastest growing and second largest criminal industry in the world, were in need of attention. We were also in need of legislation that would support the victims of trafficking with resources and funding to provide for healing therapy and a fresh start. In just a few short years Colorado has earned a top rating in how we combat modern day slavery. This was only made possible through changes in laws set in place by the Colorado legislature.

I urge you to approve this bill that would create mandatory minimum prison sentences for those found guilty of exploiting minors in sex trafficking for financial gain. We are rooted as advocates for those victims, we more aptly desire to label survivors, and we can feel proud that Colorado is a national leader in the response to this criminal industry. Passing this bill would show the nation that Colorado is committed to prosecuting criminals that would so selfishly and violently abuse our youth. This will also provide assurance to the survivors that they can come forward and feel safe knowing that we, the citizens of Colorado, stand with our law enforcement agencies, our legislators, and our prosecutors as we insist on the incarceration of their perpetrators. The first line of defense and support for these vulnerable, frightened individuals is to ensure that their victimizer is in prison and their healing and new life can begin.

Roger Patrizio

Chairman of the Board

Human Trafficking Task Force of Southern Colorado