
SARA BRATTON BRADBURY

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February 9, 2026

RE: SB26-015

Concerning Offenses Involving Commercial Sexual Activity with a Child

Senator Byron Pelton
Senator Dylan Roberts
Majority Leader Monica Duran
Minority Leader Jarvis Caldwell

Dear Senators Pelton and Robert, and Leaders Duran and Caldwell:

My name is Sara Bratton Bradbury. I am a 4th generation Colorado native, granddaughter of two one-room schoolhouse teachers, and mother of 3 daughters. As a 1987 graduate of Colorado College, I majored in history and trained as an elementary teacher—my dream being teaching first graders like my favorite teacher. Life took me in a different direction, and I became a middle school teacher. After teaching for a while, I became a stay-at-home mother and began using my “free time” to volunteer at, and join the Board of, Denver Street School, a private high school for students who had been kicked out of every school they had attended. In 2013 I began learning about sex trafficking of children in Colorado. Along with Tom Tillapaugh, then the Executive Director of DSS, I set about learning everything I could about sex trafficking. In July 2015 we opened Hope Academy of the Denver Street School, a campus specifically for girls aged 12-22 who had experienced sexual exploitation and/or sex trafficking in the Denver-metro area. I was the Director from January 2016 until February 2019 when I decided to return to school to get my master’s in social work, graduating from the Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis in May 2021. My master’s concentration was Violence and Injury Prevention, specializing in the impacts of trauma and sex trafficking. While in school I was part of a collaboration between the School of Law, the Brown School, and the undergraduate school to educate the campus about human trafficking. Additionally, I had practicum experiences in the St. Louis Circuit Attorney’s Victim Services Office and with Gateway Alliance Against Human Trafficking. Post-graduation I have been an active member of Western Slope Against Trafficking, the Colorado Human Trafficking Train-the-Trainer program, teach a course at Western Colorado University on human trafficking, do a training for students in the Education Department on working with traumatized students in the classroom, and have been a presenter at the Colorado Organization of Victim Advocates conference the past 3 years. My day-job is as Program Advocate for Project Hope of the Gunnison Valley, and I am trained as an expert witness by Trauma Trial Experts. It was my hope to be able to testify in person but am unable to attend due to my work schedule.

Colorado statutes use terminology that is outdated and needs to be changed. Over 10 years ago when I first started in this arena, we were trained to stop using the term “child prostitute”, as it indicates complicity and consent. A child cannot, per both state and federal law, consent to sex. In other words, there is no such thing as a child prostitute. There are prostituted children, there is pandering of a child, pimping a child, patronizing prostituted child—but there are no child prostitutes. The language needs to reflect that children are not complicit in the harm done to them.

Currently our state laws recognize that the commercial sale of a child for sex is a crime, however our laws are lacking the other side of the economic equation—there would be no sale of a child for sex if there were no buyers. The law of supply and demand is a fundamental economic model taught in all business courses. Without demand there would be no need for supply. Federal law states that even the obtaining of a child for the purpose of sex is a crime (18 U.S.C § 1591- Sex trafficking of children or by force, fraud, or coercion). If the child is under 14, the purchaser (like the seller) faces 15 years to life. If the child is 14-17, the purchaser (like the seller) faces 10 years to life. The purchase of a child for sex includes acknowledging that luring a child via the internet for sex or knowingly soliciting a child for sexual services is a crime. Our laws need to reflect the demand-side of the equation.

Something that is lacking in the legalese of laws is the acknowledgement of the traumatic harms done to children when they have experienced sexual exploitation or trafficking. Childhood trauma impacts a person for their entire life, and the trauma is exacerbated by the accusatory language of the law which implies that the child was complicit in their abuse and exploitation. A child who has been trafficked has been taught that their voice does not matter, that their body is something to be used by someone else, that they are for sale—and their worth is determined by the price a buyer will pay. Their bodies were not ready for the demands placed on them. Often, they have been violated with items not meant for the body. They have experienced damage to organs that might never be able to heal. The purchase of a child for sale is nothing less than the purchase of rape. Do we believe that purchasing a person for the purpose of rape is something that should be overlooked? Do we believe that somehow because money exchanged hands there is no victim and no harm was done? A person who intentionally purchases sex with a child is intent on rape. Any child who has had their body purchased for sex has experienced untold numbers of trauma and should be entitled to justice through our laws and services provided to help them heal. Please recognize and acknowledge the harms done by buyers, and the needs of survivors.

Dr. Vince Felitti pioneered a study (the ACES study [https://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797\(98\)00017-8/fulltext](https://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797(98)00017-8/fulltext)) between 1995 and 1997 on 17,000 patients regarding the lifetime impacts of childhood trauma. Results showed that when a child has experienced 4 or more Adverse Childhood Experiences their risk for behavioral, physical, and mental health concerns increased significantly.

- increased risk for smoking, alcoholism and drug abuse
- increased risk for depression and suicide attempts
- poor self-rated health
- 50 or more sexual partners
- greater likelihood of sexually transmitted disease
- challenges with physical inactivity, and severe obesity
- likelihood of attempted suicide across the lifespan
- increased risk for broken bones
- heart disease
- lung disease
- liver disease
- multiple types of cancer
- impaired job functioning
- homelessness
- criminal justice involvement

We must change the laws and protect our children or face the significant societal consequences in their adulthood.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sara Bratton Bradbury

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BILL NO: Senate Bill 26-015
TITLE: CONCERNING OFFENSES INVOLVING COMMERCIAL SEXUAL ACTIVITY WITH A CHILD
COMMITTEE: Senate Judiciary Committee
DATE: February 9, 2026
POSITION: SUPPORT

Dear Chairperson Gonzales and Subcommittee Members:

Thank you for hearing testimony on Senate Bill 1591 (“SB 26-015”) relating to the plight of child sex trafficking victims within the state.

Shared Hope International is a non-profit organization dedicated to preventing, restoring, and bringing justice to survivors of child and youth sex trafficking. Shared Hope has been working in Washington, across the country, and throughout the globe for over 25 years to guide and support appropriate responses to protect survivors, hold offenders to account, and ultimately prevent the crime entirely.

SB26-015 represents a critical and overdue step forward in protecting children by modernizing outdated statutory language and holding those who create the demand for commercial sexual exploitation appropriately accountable. Children who are bought and sold for sex are victims of exploitation—not participants in criminal activity. Yet for far too long, state laws across the country have relied on terminology rooted in “child prostitution,” language that obscures the coercion, abuse, and power imbalance inherent in these crimes. By replacing this outdated framing with the term “commercial sexual activity with a child,” SB26-015 makes explicit what research, survivor experience, and common sense already confirm: children cannot consent to their own exploitation.

Equally important, SB26-015 directly addresses the demand that fuels commercial sexual exploitation. Exploitation does not occur in a vacuum. It exists because individuals are willing to buy access to a child’s body. Through our *Demanding Justice* report, Shared Hope has conducted a comprehensive analysis of state laws nationwide and consistently found that weak, ambiguous, or outdated demand-side statutes undermine accountability and allow exploiters to evade meaningful consequences.

Our research demonstrates that laws which clearly define buyer conduct, establish strong intent standards, and impose serious penalties for knowingly soliciting a child are among the most effective tools states have to prevent exploitation before it occurs. SB26-015 does exactly that by strengthening penalties for those who knowingly solicit a child for commercial sexual activity and by increasing consequences when internet luring or technology is used to facilitate exploitation. These provisions reflect the modern realities of how buyers access and exploit children today. Importantly, demand-focused accountability is not merely punitive—it is preventive. Evidence and on-the-ground experience show that when buyers face clear legal consequences, exploitation decreases. Strong demand-side laws improve prosecutorial outcomes, deter would-be offenders, and shift the burden of accountability away from victims and onto those who cause the harm.

SB26-015 reflects a survivor-centered, evidence-informed approach that aligns Colorado’s statutes with national best practices and our evolving understanding of child sexual exploitation. It sends a clear message that our state will no longer tolerate laws that minimize harm, mislabel victims, or fail to hold exploiters fully accountable.

For these reasons, Shared Hope International urges your support for SB26-015. This legislation will strengthen child protections, modernize our legal framework, and reaffirm our shared commitment to ensuring that children are treated as victims in need of protection—not as criminals.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Respectfully submitted,

Sincerely,



Sidney E. McCoy, Esq.

For questions or additional information:
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Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I am writing in strong support of **SB26-015**, a bill that takes an important step toward protecting children and holding sex predators accountable.

For too long, Colorado law has used the term “*child prostitution*,” language that wrongly suggests consent where none can exist. Children cannot consent to being bought or sold. SB26-015 corrects this by replacing that outdated terminology with “*commercial sexual activity in the crimes of soliciting for child prostitution*” making it clear these sex crimes are exploitation and abuse, not choices made by children.

This bill also requires courts to impose mandatory minimum sentences in a range of sex crimes involving child victims. It is critical that the punishment fit these serious crimes--consistent, appropriate jail time sends a clear message that Colorado will not tolerate the sexual exploitation of minors and closes loopholes that have allowed offenders to receive inadequate punishment.

For the past 10+ years, I have been a consistent leader in strengthening Colorado’s laws against child trafficking and sexual exploitation. As a State Representative, I ran and passed numerous bills against human sex trafficking, including mandatory jail time for child sex trafficking, information to schools and parents to detect human trafficking recruitment/coercion of our children, and truck drivers’ training to detect and report sex trafficking to facilitate victim rescues. In our fight against modern-day sex slavery, we must fight on all fronts to stop this evil and hold those profiting from mass child rape accountable for their crimes. SB26-015 builds on that foundation and ensures that those who exploit children face real consequences.

Protecting children should never be partisan. This is a common-sense, victim-centered bill, and I respectfully urge the committee to vote **yes** on SB26-015.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Terri Carver

Colorado Springs

Former State Representative (2014-2022)