



MAJOR CITIES CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

February 6, 2018

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Chairman
135 Hart SOB
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member
331 Hart SOB
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Feinstein,

On behalf of the Major Cities Chiefs, representing the Nation's largest metropolitan law enforcement agencies in the country, I am writing to voice our strong support of the "Protecting Rights of Those Exploited by Coercive Trafficking Act of 2018" or the PROTECT Act. This bill would encourage judges to impose stiff criminal penalties against sex traffickers who use drugs to coerce women to engage in their illicit enterprises.

The Act would make clear that traffickers using drugs to coerce people to engage in commercial sex acts and human labor constitutes coercion. Law enforcement often see individuals addicted to narcotics who are unable to get themselves out of a dangerous sexual victimization cycle because of that addiction or fear that they will be held accountable because of their drug use. These victims fail to report the horrible situation of prostitution and slavery they have entered. Many times, that coercion may not be clear from the beginning and the victim is punished for their actions without the criminal justice system seeing this underlying problem.

This bill would also discourage the enhanced penalty if the unlawful conduct was the direct result of the defendant's own sexual victimization, which would seek to ensure that criminal penalties are reserved for traffickers and not used to punish trafficking victims. Victims need to be able to come forward to law enforcement knowing their side can be heard about the sex trafficking industry despite their personal drug use.

We encourage Congress to listen to the voice of our Association and other law enforcement groups who are endorsing the Act and see that this legislation is set in motion.

Sincerely,

J. Thomas Manger
Chief of Police
Montgomery County Police Department
President, Major Cities Chiefs Association

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