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HB 2205, HB 2206

House Judiciary Committee
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Chair Barker and members of the committee,

I am Carolyn Tomei, former State Representative for House District 41. Thank you for hearing House Bill 2205 and House bill 2206, relating to child sex trafficking.

I have been working on this topic for many years, and these two bills are the products of a “kitchen cabinet” I’ve convened, dedicated to continuing this work. We had wide participation of stakeholders, including Senator Ron Wyden, Amanda Marshall, US Attorney for the District of Oregon, Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum, Multnomah County Commission Diane McKeel, as well as representatives from child welfare, mental health, law enforcement, district attorneys, researchers and more.

We have talked about child sex trafficking in this committee before. It is rampant; it is so very damaging to the children involved; these kids truly are victims, yet don’t always see themselves in that light. Law enforcement often encounters these children as runaways or delinquents, not identifying them as sex trafficked victims, so they often are not funneled into appropriate services. Even when they are properly identified, these girls are resistant and often run right back to the streets. It is a very, very difficult population.

In previous sessions, we’ve been successful in giving district attorneys better tools to prosecute both the traffickers and the buyers of sex. Last February, the legislature allocated \$2million to open a specialized residential treatment center for these girls. Today it is up and running, and Margaret Scott from Morrison Family Services is here to tell you a little bit about it.

These are all positive steps, but still not enough.

United States District Attorney Amanda Marshall has been passionate about protecting these children. Unfortunately, she could not be here today. But one point she continually made, is that this is a statewide problem, not just Portland, and most of the girls are homegrown, not foreign born. There are many, many people and organizations who want to help and we need a statewide strategic plan to prioritize and direct those faith-based and non-profit organizations into areas of service where they can be most effective.

HB 2205 does just that. The structure is modeled on the Child Abuse Multidisciplinary Intervention fund, i.e .the CAMI Fund, in the Crime Victim Services Division of the Department of Justice; it establishes a special fund with an advisory board that can seek out and receive public and private money dedicated to Child Sex Trafficking efforts. Aaron Knott is here to describe the details.

The other bill, HB 2206, is a language change, desired by the Multnomah County District Attorney. It changes the name of the crime of “patronizing a prostitute” to “commercial sexual solicitation” and they’ll be explaining shortly why this is needed.

Finally I just want to say “Thank You” to Rep. Kathleen Taylor and Rep. John Huffman, for their willingness to continue fighting for these children, and to all the many others involved in this effort.

I urge your passage of HB 2205 and HB 2206