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### Community United for Safety and Protection Addresses Critical Concerns Surrounding the Governor's Council on Human and Sex Trafficking

The Governor's Council on Human and Sex Trafficking met on January 12, 2024, this meeting was recorded and the presentations raised more questions than they answered. Members of the public were not allowed to ask any questions of the presenters.

Of particular public concern is the insular manner in which this Governor's Council on Human and Sex Trafficking operates. It seems to be taking in person lessons on how to evade public scrutiny from other States' human trafficking commissions, councils, and task forces across the USA. These groups' members are hand picked to forward the cookie cutter laws that recriminalize prostitution as sex trafficking with increased jail time and other penalties like forced registry on the sex offender list, while doing nothing to hold perpetrators accountable.

"My concern deepens as it becomes evident that certain groups involved in the Governor's Council on Human and Sex Trafficking are strategically selecting members to advocate for laws to not only recriminalize prostitution as sex trafficking but also escalate penalties, leading to increased jail time for sex trafficking survivors," said Amber Nickerson of Community United For Safety and Protection. "These efforts appear more focused on imposing punitive measures."

This is highly inappropriate because these councils use their powers and hyperbole based on absolutely no data, yet they're recommending adoption of an educational track on human and sex trafficking to be presented alongside sexual misconduct to be amended into Erin's law. They also presented a compiled educational resource guide full of links that the public wasn't allowed access to.

"Of major concern were statements from the director of North Carolina's Human Trafficking government funded group, bragging about how only certain agencies and organizations were certified by them to provide services to victims," said Maxine Doogan of Community United For Safety and Protection. "This leads to gate keeping of who is the "right kind of victim" to receive services. How would Alaska deal with this issue? It's a real issue considering that the state domestic violence providers seem to engage in this kind of behavior currently".

A non-profit called Shared Hope reported to the council that it produces policy for States to pass into laws and then makes “report cards” on States who don’t comply with their policy. For example, Alaska was given an ‘F’ for not having laws like a safe harbor law, a law that allows for youth to claim they were forced to perform sex for money so they wouldn’t be convicted of prostitution.

Later, the data subcommittee of the council stated that it had searched 10 years worth of Alaska state prosecution records and didn’t find any cases where people under 18 had been charged with prostitution, rendering a safe harbor law obsolete in Alaska. We hope Alaska doesn’t waste time and resources passing unnecessary laws just to not be given a fake ‘F’ from an anti-prostitution group like Shared Hope.

“One has to question the value as well as the motivations of such a council and any of its activities and/or recommendations,” said Terra Burns. “We can only hope that the legislators will be that stop gap and ask many questions of the council members as well as the groups they’ve gathered data from.”

### **HB259 seeks to codify this council into law.**

Chris Darnell, the head of the data subcommittee for the council said he reviewed state prosecutions but not local municipalities for prostitution charges for youth.

The Sex Trafficking Council's data set is entirely composed of numbers reported by non-profits who are financially incentivized to inflate the numbers or use alternate definitions of sex trafficking that yield higher numbers. . Why doesn't the state collect all the numbers from all the cities to provide comprehensive numbers on all crimes arrested, charged and convicted? The Council does not seem to have even consulted the Crime In Alaska report, which provides the number of sex trafficking cases reported to law enforcement.

Chris Darnell stated that it was okay that different groups used different definitions for sex trafficking or human trafficking as both those terms are used by them interchangeably. He represented to the council that it was to be a “clearinghouse” of data, yet the council would not have responsibility for validating the data in a report it planned to produce, that it was okay that the data came from non-uniform definitions and competing organizations.

One of the examples provided by council members was how the Anchorage Police Department uses data for trafficking that include all runaway youth, while other groups count all sex workers as sex trafficking victims. Groups like Covent House, My House and Priceless counted the same clients multiple times to inflate the numbers.

Covenant House, per a [Loyola University](#) study, uses the following question to determine if a youth has been sex trafficked: [“Sometimes young people who are homeless or who are having difficulties with their families have very few options to survive or fulfill their basic needs, such as food and shelter. Sometimes they are exploited or feel the need to use their sexuality to help them survive. Have you or anyone else ever received anything of value, such as money, a place to stay, food, drugs, gifts or favors, in exchange for your performing a sexual activity?”](#)

The council has chosen to publish this sort of “data” about the number of sex trafficking cases in Alaska despite the fact that real numbers relevant to criminal policy are available in the annual Crime In Alaska Report and its supplemental report on sex crimes, which show that they have received a total of 6 reports since 2020 of criminal sex trafficking. These reports reflect the total number of trafficking cases reported to law enforcement agencies in Alaska. All of the service providers in the council's report are mandated reporters and required to use the federal definition of sex trafficking, which means that these numbers should reflect reports of all the minor sex trafficking survivors who have received services from these agencies, which they report to be in the hundreds yearly.

This raises the important question of how much money these agencies are receiving in terms of federal, state and private funding. Looking at only federal OVC funding, sex trafficking grants have accounted for up to 69% of the yearly revenue for some of these agencies.

In summary:

- For Covenant House Alaska, the largest OVC grant received was a 2020 \$1.25 million grant. This marks about 10% of their total revenue that year (\$12.8 million). Executive compensation made up 3% of their expenses in 2020, while other salaries and wages made up 47% of their expenses.
- The Alaska Institute for Justice's largest award was an \$800,000 grant in 2022, which was 47% of their 2022 revenue. That year, executive compensation made up 9% of their expenses while other salaries and wages made up 49% of their expenses.
- The Alaska Native Justice Center's highest award was a \$2.4 million grant in 2020, or 69% of their total revenue that year (approximately \$3.5 million). They listed no executive compensation, and around 44% of their expenses on other salaries and wages.
- The Alaska Native Women's Resource Center received one OVC grant: an \$800,000 grant in 2019 that marked 56% of their total 2019 revenue. Executive compensation made up 24% of their expenses that year, while other salaries and wages made up approximately 21%.

Legislators, media and the public must recognize that these groups have financial interest to inflate the numbers of trafficking victims by using false and misleading definitions to continue to qualify for grant monies.

Despite receiving millions of dollars to provide services to sex trafficking survivors, several of these organizations continue to work with police to criminalize sex trafficking victims and refuse them important and potentially life saving services.

The Community United for Safety and Protection is a group of current and former sex workers, sex trafficking survivors, and our allies, advocating for safety and protection for everyone in Alaska's sex industries.###