



Letter to Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

January 20, 2010

Concerned Women for America (CWA) of Georgia stands in opposition to S.B. 304 which seeks to decriminalize (the legalizing of an illegal act) prostitution for those under the age of 16 years. CWA understands that minors found in prostitution are victims of human trafficking, sexual abuse, and exploitation. However, there are better ways to help them than this ill-advised legislation.

Decriminalization creates a friendly environment for pimps and traffickers. By tying the hands of police, victims cannot be identified and separated from their handlers. Law enforcement needs these laws to obtain testimony against the exploiters and, most importantly, to help the victims.

Other jurisdictions have proven that there are better alternatives to decriminalization. Upon arrest, victims can be identified and placed in diversionary programs designed for rescue and rehabilitation. They can also be provided with an affirmative defense to criminal charges. But in all these cases, the arrest is the action that allows for the intervention leading to education or rehabilitation.

Vigorous law enforcement pursuit of traffickers and johns will make prostitution less profitable and thereby make it harder to sustain. Enforcing the laws on the books against johns and pimps should be the focus of law enforcement—without demand, prostitution and trafficking do not exist.

Those who struggle to help these children all agree on the need to “do something”, but S.B. 304 is not the answer. Our laws establish a set of rules of conduct recognized and established by the community. Decriminalization of minors sends the message that the community accepts children in prostitution—it normalizes it.

There is nothing normal about one human being buying access to another, especially in the case of a child being purchased by an adult. The children of Georgia deserve better protection than that provided by Georgia Senate Bill 304. We trust the Senate Judiciary Committee will quickly realize this and reject this proposed legislation.

If you have any questions after reading the talking points and resource papers that accompany this letter, please feel free to contact me by phone (706) 491-0374 or by e-mail at legislation@georgia.cwfa.org.

Thank you for your time and may God bless your work as you seek to do the right thing in protecting the victims of human trafficking, sexual abuse, and exploitation in our state.

Sincerely,

Dale Austin
Legislative Liaison