

HUMAN RIGHTS PROJECT FOR GIRLS

The Honorable Dave Camp
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sander Levin
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways and Means
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

April 15, 2014

Dear Chairman Camp and Ranking Member Levin:

Human Rights Project for Girls (Rights4Girls) applauds the significant effort made by the Committee to explore issues related to the commercial sexual exploitation of children in the U.S. and particularly the ways in which involvement in the child welfare system renders youth more vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking. In particular, we commend the Human Resources Subcommittee Hearing on *Preventing and Addressing Sex Trafficking of Youth in Foster Care* on October 23, 2013 and the subsequent introduction of game-changing legislation introduced by Congressman Reichert in *The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Improving Opportunities for Youth in Foster Care Act*, H.R. 4058.

This legislation represents tremendous progress both in terms of our growing understanding of the prevalence and dynamics of domestic child sex trafficking and our efforts to address it. The steps proposed in the Act would help identify and connect child victims of sex trafficking and those at-risk with vital services and support at a much earlier stage. In addition, the bill would help prevent child sex trafficking by requiring state child welfare agencies to report any child missing from care to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children within 24 hours, ensuring that such children will no longer be invisible and thus, easy prey for traffickers. Lastly, the bill will finally give us critical data as to the prevalence of sex trafficking in the child welfare system nationally by making sex trafficking one of the data points agencies can input into the AFCARS system.

Every day in this country, vulnerable children are bought and sold for sex. And in the states that have examined their child trafficking populations, they have found that the vast majority of these children have previous child welfare involvement. Moreover, the FBI reported that of the 105 child trafficking victims rescued as part of their Operation Cross Country child sex raid, 60 percent were from foster care or group homes.

The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Improving Opportunities for Youth in Foster Care Act represents a significant effort to address child sex trafficking by improving our child welfare systems' response to trafficked and exploited children. As a human rights organization dedicated to improving the lives of vulnerable young women and girls in the U.S., we urge Congress to pass this critical piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Human Rights Project for Girls
Washington, DC