

Judiciary Committee
Public Testimony of the CT Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)
H.B. 5571: An Act Concerning Human Trafficking
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The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) is a statewide nonprofit organization that advocates for and empowers women and girls in Connecticut, especially those who are underserved or marginalized. For nearly forty-five years, CWEALF has advocated for policies that advance the economic security of women across our state to promote gender equity in the workplace.

CWEALF urges the committee to support House Bill No. 5571: *An Act Concerning Human Trafficking* as a mechanism to strengthen protections for victims of human trafficking and to diminish the demand for such exploitative practices.

Human trafficking is a form of modern slavery in which traffickers use force, fraud, or coercion to control victims to engage in commercial sex acts or labor services against his or her will.¹ The International Labor Organization estimates 20.9 million victims of human trafficking globally. Fifty-five percent of victims are women and girls, and 26% of victims are children.²

House Bill No. 5571 continues last session's efforts to combat human trafficking and aligns with the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Council's policy recommendations. Last year, Public Act No. 17-32 created a new stand-alone felony charge of "Commercial Sexual Abuse of a Minor" to address the issue of patronizing a minor and increased the penalty for violation of the law. Public Act No. 17-32 also expanded the types of entities that are required to post signage regarding human trafficking, with a financial penalty for failure to comply.

House Bill No. 5571 takes several additional steps to strengthen the state's anti-trafficking statutes. The proposal will add members to the Trafficking in Person Council to expand the Council's scope. House Bill No. 5571 will also revise and consolidate educational training and programs to promote accurate reporting of suspected incidents of trafficking.

¹ National Human Trafficking Hotline. Retrieved from: <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/type-trafficking/human-trafficking>

² Polaris Project. Retrieved from: <https://polarisproject.org/facts>

In addition, H.B. 5571 will prohibit any operator of a hotel, motel or similar lodging from offering hourly rates for any sleeping accommodation. These small technical changes are an effective way to create long-lasting and inclusive policies to combat human trafficking.

To become a leader in policies that support women, girls and their families, Connecticut must continue to develop solutions that combat sexual exploitation, sex trafficking and labor trafficking in our state.

CWEALF urges the Committee to support House Bill No. 5571.