MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

Require the Connection Between Social Media and Human Trafficking be Investigated

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The New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NYSCADV) urges Governor Hochul to sign this legislation which would require the New York State interagency task force on human trafficking to investigate connections between social media and human trafficking.

Social media platforms offer human traffickers ample recruitment opportunities. According to The Polaris Project, recruitment for both sex and labor trafficking increasingly happens on social media platforms.¹ The ability of social media to tailor ads and marketing towards specific and often targeted demographics allows traffickers to lure in potential victims using fake online relationships and deceptive job offers. When the controversial website Backpage.com shut down, many traffickers moved to mainstream social media and dating sites including Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Plenty of Fish, OKCupid, and Tinder. Human traffickers creatively adapted to social media ads and sales features, finding ways to circumvent being reported as inappropriate content. In 2017, nearly 8 percent of active federal online sex trafficking cases prosecuted in the United States involved advertisements for sex on Facebook.²

Victims of human trafficking have also reported that their own personal social media pages are weaponized against them as a tool for control. Polaris’ Survivor Survey found that 34% of trafficking survivors reported restricted use of social media, 32% were stalked (aka “monitored”) by their traffickers, and 25% had non-consensual images posted or distributed without their consent.¹

Understanding how human traffickers and victims interact with social media provides insight into the problem as well as potential solutions to stop human traffickers.

NYSCADV is pleased the Legislature passed this bill require the New York State interagency task force on human trafficking to investigate connections between social media and human trafficking and urges Governor Hochul to sign this bill.

ABOUT NYSCADV:
Established in 1978, NYSCADV is designated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as the information clearinghouse, primary point of contact, and resource center on domestic violence for the State of New York. NYSCADV is responsible for supporting the development of policies, protocol, and procedures to enhance domestic violence intervention and prevention and also provides education and technical assistance to the network of primary-purpose domestic violence service providers statewide.

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