

**Written Testimony on Behalf of the National Organization for Women  
New York City Chapter**

**On**

**Prosecuting the Crime of Trafficking**

Good afternoon. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on the behalf of the National Organization for Women of New York City. NOW-NYC launched its campaign End the Business of Trafficking in the Fall of 2006. The New York State Anti-Trafficking Coalition, which NOW-NYC coordinates, succeeded in passing New York's first anti-trafficking law.

Now that we have the strongest law in the nation, it is critical that the law is implemented. We are all too familiar with laws that are on the books but not enforced. While the success of this piece of legislation is still new, we must capture the momentum that exists. First and foremost, the New York State budget for 2008 must allocate minimally \$10 million to undertake the challenge of combating human trafficking in our state.

This is essential if we're going to obtain measurable results in the war on organized sex and labor exploitation. Traffickers brazenly operate in our neighborhoods, advertise in our newspapers, set up makeshift brothels known as "10 day houses" and supply existing massage parlors, brothels and escort services. Labor traffickers are part of well organized networks that often smuggle people into the United States and hold them in indentured servitude.

High profit margins coupled with negligible-to-low risk of arrest and prosecution have led to the proliferation of organized prostitution and labor exploitation in urban, rural and suburban areas of New York.

The funds are needed to track the crime, create task forces, train law enforcement on the ground, supplement District Attorney's budgets and agencies charged with implementation and fund shelters where trafficking victims can seek services.

There is a well-agreed-upon set of services that are needed to address the most acute and immediate needs of trafficking victims and to begin their transition back to being productive members of society:

- \*Shelters (and related case management services)
- \*Runaway and homeless youth programs and shelters for at-risk kids
- \*Legal services
- \*Counseling and mental health services
- \*Transitional housing and job counseling
- \*Medical care
- \*Law enforcement resources: investigators in police depts and DAs offices, training of law enforcement personnel, expert witnesses
- \*Cost of investigations by police and district attorneys

- \*Statewide education program for service providers who are likely to come into contact with trafficking victims (DV, sexual assault, immigration, emergency room/clinic workers)
- \*Study to collect statistics on trafficking activity and numbers of trafficking victims in NYS
- \* Increased budgets at agencies (AG/DCJS) that serve as law enforcement coordinators among federal, state and local law enforcement and intelligence community

Some of these services will become available through existing public benefits programs (Medicaid and Section 8) to trafficking victims who become federally certified as trafficking victims. However, victims who are waiting (often many months) for the certification process to go through fall through the cracks, as do victims who may not ever qualify for federal certification if their traffickers are not being investigated or prosecuted.

One of the main roadblocks to prosecution at the federal and state level has been lack of witnesses. The victims of trafficking are in fear for themselves and their families, and so we need to depend less on them and work more on behind-the-scenes, undercover investigations to prove the operation of trafficking rings. District attorneys also need to make seeking indictments for traffickers a priority. Judges, prosecutors, police and court workers need training on how to apply the new statute.

The new law should make prosecuting traffickers easier. Things that have tied district attorneys' hands in the past are no longer there – the new law provides police and prosecutors with the ability to wire tap suspected traffickers, and to build cases based on crimes such as illegal confiscation of passports.

We need funding to supplement District Attorneys' budgets so that they may conduct broader, wider investigations. This is an underground business that does not resemble robbery on the street corner, and it requires more expertise and effort to combat.