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## **Human Trafficking on City's Radar, Still Thousands of Victims In Need NOW-NYC Commemorates National Human Trafficking Awareness Day**

New York, NY—In the three years since the passage of New York State's Anti-Human Trafficking Law, two traffickers have been convicted in New York City and a total of 19 indictments have been handed down. The new law, which went into effect in November of 2007, makes sex trafficking a Class B felony and labor trafficking a Class D felony.

The law stands as a national model for its broad definition of human trafficking which reflects the reality of the many ways traffickers manipulate their victims. An estimated 17,500 individuals are trafficked into the U.S. every year, and domestically, almost 250,000 youth are at-risk for child sexual exploitation. The U.S. Department of Justice named New York City's JFK airport as a main trafficking hub, and a 2008 report estimated that there were at least 3,769 commercially sexually exploited youth here in New York City.

"We know from the numbers that we've barely scratched the surface," said NOW-NYC Executive Director Sonia Ossorio. "Few cities have as compelling and immediate need to address both sex and labor trafficking that is happening throughout our community."

The Queen's D.A., which has had a total of 3 indictments, secured the first conviction under the state statute in December of 2009. David Brown was convicted of forcing a 19-year-old woman to have sex with several men a day for 12 days by threatening to cut her up into small pieces so that no one would be able to find her. He is now serving 25 years to life in prison.

The Brooklyn D.A.'s office announced 4 indictments charging 8 individuals with sex trafficking last June—along with the creation of a new Sex Trafficking Unit with a 24-hour hotline—and has led the way with 10 indictments to date. The Bronx D.A. has had five indictments, and the Manhattan D.A. has had only one. The Mayor's office unveiled a citywide public education campaign last year that aims to connect trafficking victims with resources.

While efforts have gotten underway, progress has been slow. In 2011 and beyond, fighting human trafficking is going to need a boost in funding for services, prioritization by the NYPD and a more dedicated focus from our district attorneys.

The National Organization for Women is the nation's largest organization working to advance women's rights and improve women's lives. The New York City Chapter of NOW, founded in 1966, is the largest chapter in the country with 5,000 members locally and 35,000 statewide. NOW-NYC works to promote women's reproductive rights, secure women's economic empowerment, and end violence and discrimination against women.

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