



October 4, 2017

**To:** Assembly Committee on Children and Families  
**Regarding:** AB 186

Dear Representative Kitchens and Committee Members,

I am representing the Lutheran Office for Public Policy, a statewide advocacy ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We advocate for just policies, especially related to hunger and poverty based on our social statements and Christian scripture.

We speak in favor of AB 186 because it will move us further in the direction of recognizing victims as victims, who should not be vulnerable to being re-victimized because of insufficient public policy. We say could because we know in many cases our justice system steers away from arresting and convicting young people caught in prostitution, but that is not enough. We need to guarantee that victims are not re-victimized by being labeled and treated as criminals in any way.

At another public hearing I was struck by Judge Ramona Gonzalez's testimony about how significant it would be to decriminalizing youth victims of sex trafficking via a change in policy. She said there is a lot of good will among judges when working with young people caught in prostitution, but that still charges such as "lewd and lascivious behavior" will sometimes go into a youth's record in place of prostitution. She had a list of examples.

The severe abuse children experience at the hands of their captors is beyond what most of us can imagine. And a high percentage of adults working in the sex industry were forced into it at an early age, so we are extremely pleased with the great legislation that was passed to change the meaning of the word consent a few years ago. But now let's take another step to help the youth.

Since 2014, I have spoken to experts on anti-sex trafficking, both from the arenas of direct services and public policy across the state. The consensus I've found via the Wisconsin Anti-Human Trafficking Consortium, the Human Trafficking Task Force of Greater Milwaukee, and individual conversations with longtime experts is that our current system isn't doing enough for trafficked youth. I applaud the state for budgeting money to build a statewide task force and provide more services, which we need more of. This is bill passed into law will create another significant movement forward.

In the midst of partisan debates, the problem of sex trafficking has brought Republicans and Democrats together. We hope that will be the case with AB 186. Please vote in favor of this bill.

Sincerely,

Pastor Cindy Crane, Director

***Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust Social Statement*** (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) The sexual body is never to be used as an object for commercial purposes, and this church will speak against the public idolatry of pleasure, freedom, and wealth that undergirds such practices. Especially deplorable is the billion dollar global sex market and the economic systems that thrive on it, both in the United States and abroad. (pg. 34)