



Dear Honorable Legislative Members,

I write to you today as a survivor, an advocate, and a voice for those who have experienced the horrific life of sex trafficking to counter the recent letter of opposition to HB259 signed by CUSP leader Amber Nickerson.

I, Staci Yates, do sit on the Council of Human and Sex Trafficking (CHST), but I am not responding to this as a member of the council but as an employee of My House and the chair of ASHTA - Alaska Stop Human and Sex Trafficking. My experience has been that no one in the public zoom meetings of the CHST has ever been denied public comment at the end. The meetings are designed for the council members, they are public noticed and they allow public comment of 2 minutes per person at the end of every meeting.

I implore you to resist the false information perpetuated by these advocates that survivor's voices are not being heard in the Council of Human and Sex trafficking, as I am one and I can attest to the fact my voice and others are being heard and we all wholeheartedly support the council's work and aspire to continue our collaborative efforts. My national and state level testimonies emphasize the urgency of supporting and protecting sex trafficking victims. Crafting laws that safeguard victims' rights and impose severe penalties on child rapists and reckless buyers of sex from minors or coerced individuals is paramount. However, it is essential to scrutinize opposing viewpoints, especially when the one advocating against bringing the Council of Human and Sex Trafficking into statute, is led by Amber Nickerson aka Amber Batts, a convicted sex trafficker who has signed the above opposing HB259 letter.

I recommend formalizing the Council of Human and Sex Trafficking through statute and continue to bring into fruition the council's recommendations as for example:

The CHST FY 24 Plan has 8 Key Priorities to address:

1. Coordination and Infrastructure for Addressing Trafficking
2. Curriculum Development and Training
3. Training to Identify and Respond to All Forms of Trafficking in Alaska
4. Public Awareness Campaign and Expand Services for Survivors of Trafficking
5. Addressing Housing Insecurities for Survivors
6. Expand Existing Services for Survivors
7. Establish Demand Reduction Diversion Programs
8. Identify Gaps in Human Trafficking Information

By establishing the CHST into statute would empower the council to fulfill its vital mission and translate recommendations into tangible actions. The priorities of awareness and education are critical for both victims of trafficking and Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP), especially when considering at-risk-youth. These aspects play a pivotal role in combating trafficking and ensuring safety. It is puzzling to me why there would be such strong opposition to the education and awareness components that the CHST aims to address. These elements are fundamental in preventing trafficking and supporting all victims of trafficking and MMIP.

By codifying CHST into statute, it would be providing hope and essential resources, aiding vulnerable Alaskans in escaping the horrors of human and sex trafficking, making our cities safer!

Thank you,

Staci Yates

Survivor of sex trafficking

My House Director of Human Trafficking Recovery Services

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February 14, 2024

RE: Opposing Council Establishment House Bill 259

Dear Alaska State Legislators,

We are writing to express our strong opposition to establishing a Council on Human and Sex Trafficking as proposed by the Governor in House Bill 259. Our group, Community United for Safety and Protection, advocates for survivors and has encountered significant challenges with the lack of inclusion of survivor advocates in these meetings. We found limited opportunities for public participation while witnessing excessive governmental and faith based participation as well as lots of issues when trying to gain access to these public meetings and meeting minutes.

Our requests for minutes/actions taken by the Governor's Council on Human and Sex Trafficking and attempts to attend these public council meetings have been ignored. We have filed complaints - one in November of 2022 (#2022-11-1930) and two in December of 2023 (#2023-11-2168 and #2023-11-2204)- with the Ombudsman's office about these two issues with no accountability or sanctions.

This is contrary to good governance and Alaska's Open Meetings Act, AS 44.62. 310-. 312. The council's conduct is duplicitous and manipulative and should not be statuted into law. We have asked for legislative oversight to address these deficiencies in our letter to Alaska legislators dated January 23, 2023 https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gTVppRRF-fo_BzBvNvI9PeARIfqNxQ688ZjB3V7tUq0/edit?usp=sharing

Therefore, we oppose HB259 because the council's structure fails to adequately include survivor advocates in decision-making processes. The absence of representation from survivor voices raises concerns about the council's ability to comprehensively address the complex issues surrounding human and sex trafficking in Alaska. Survivor perspectives are invaluable in shaping effective strategies and ensuring that intervention and prevention programs are genuinely responsive to the needs of those affected.

Secondly, the limited avenues for public participation and the heavy governmental oversight described in the amendments are deeply troubling. Public input is vital in creating policies that

reflect diverse perspectives and experiences. Unfortunately, survivors in our group, CUSP, have repeatedly faced exclusion and invalidation in public council meetings, hindering our ability to contribute meaningfully to the discussions. In the January 18, 2024 meeting, the council hosted several presentations by non-profits and other states' commissions and didn't allow for any questions from the public. This demonstrates that this council is not interested in a robust public process or discourse on this topic.

We urge you to oppose House Bill 259, emphasizing the importance of inclusivity, survivor advocacy, and robust public engagement in the establishment and functioning of the Council on Human and Sex Trafficking. A more collaborative and transparent approach is essential to addressing the challenges posed by human and sex trafficking effectively.

We are concerned that the conduct of those who make up the council members as well as the structural barriers they've erected to exclude survivors and other public members who are directly affected populations from participation or observation will continue if this council is chaptered into law which is why we urge you to oppose HB259.

Thank you for your attention to these concerns, and we hope for a reconsideration that prioritizes inclusivity, survivor perspectives, and public engagement in this critical matter.

Thank you,
Maxine Doogan
Amber Nickerson
Tara Burns
Kat McElroy

Ombudsman Complaints about the Governor's Human Trafficking Council
#2023-11-2168
#2023-11-2204
#2022-11-1930