

# **Support HB 3446: Protecting Women Against Forced Abortion and Sex Trafficking**

**by Rep. Jodie Laubenberg**

**Goal:** Texas Alliance for Life supports amending Texas law to require that abortion facilities place signs in a clearly visible area that would 1) inform women of their legal right to refuse an abortion and 2) provide contact information for the National Human Trafficking Hotline.

## **State Law:**

Texas law already requires certain places of business to post signs that are visible to employees and patrons that give a toll-free phone number for a national human trafficking helpline. These places include establishments that hold a liquor license and hotels and motels pending the final disposition of a common nuisance lawsuit. Sec. 104.07, Alcoholic Beverage Code, and Sec 125.002(f-1), Civil Practice and Remedies Code.

## **Background Information:**

Human trafficking, including sex trafficking, is a prevalent problem in the United States, and particularly Texas. The following information is from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services:

- An estimated 18,000 foreign nationals are trafficked into the United States each year. According to the Polaris Project, the number of US citizens trafficked within our own borders are even higher, with an estimate of more than 200,000 American children at high risk for trafficking into the sex industry each year. ICE Operation Predator estimates that 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 10 boys in the United States are sexually exploited before they reach adulthood. Child trafficking, child pornography, and international sex tourism now generates billions of dollars a year worldwide.
- As of January 2006, of all human trafficking victims certified in the United States, 25% of them were in Texas, the majority of whom were in Houston. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Rescue and Restore Campaign Results, April 2004 thru January 2006). Of the three social service agencies in Houston serving human trafficking victims, YMCA Intl. Houston has served over 105 victims, two of whom were under age minors (YMCA Intl., 2007).

Abortion facility employees are uniquely situated to identify and assist victims of sex trafficking. A recent study published in the *Annals of Health Law*<sup>1</sup> discussed the prevalence of abortion in the sex trafficking business:

- 107 women were surveyed. Of the 66 women who answered the question on the “number or pregnancies they had during trafficking,” 47 women (71.2%) reported at least one pregnancy, and 14 of those women (21.2%) reported five or more pregnancies.
- More than half of the 67 women who reported a pregnancy (55.2%) reported at least one abortion, with 20 respondents (29.9%) reporting multiple abortions.
- Without accounting for underreporting, the 67 women collectively reported 114 abortions.

There is also evidence that suggests many of these abortions are forced upon the woman.

- While only 34 respondents answered the question whether the abortion was forced upon them, 18 of those women (52.9%) answered that one or more of their abortions was at least partly forced upon them.
- One woman reported 17 forced abortions.

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<sup>1</sup>“The Health Consequences of Sex Trafficking and Their Implications for Identifying Victims in Healthcare Facilities” by Laura J. Lederer and Christopher A. Wetzel, *Annals of Health Law*, Winter 2014