



National Urban League

Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Russell Senate Office Building Room 317
Washington, DC 20510-1702

Honorable Charles Schumer
Democratic Leader
United States Senate
Hart Senate Office Building Room 322
Washington, DC 20510-3203

October 18, 2017

Dear Senate Majority Leader McConnell and Senate Democratic Leader Schumer,

As President and CEO of the National Urban League, and on behalf of our 88 affiliates in 36 states and the District of Columbia, I write to urge you to pass the "Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act" (S.1693).

For too long, perpetrators of sex trafficking have been able to use the Communications Decency Act (CDA) as a shield to prevent law enforcement and victims of human trafficking from holding companies actively engaged in sex trafficking accountable. States and local communities have been on the frontlines of fighting sex trafficking for decades, and we have the responsibility to combat human trafficking however it occurs. It is necessary to amend the CDA in order to stem the growth of child sex trafficking on the internet and ensure state law enforcement has the ability to protect our citizens.

The National Urban League supports this effort to stop sex trafficking, particularly due to the disproportionate impact sex trafficking has on people of color. According to FBI statistics, 59.4% of prostitution arrests for those under the age of 18 are African-American. Furthermore, the Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates that between 2008-2010, 40% of all victims of sex trafficking were African-American.

State and local authorities have reported the trend of child sex trafficking on the internet firsthand on websites like Backpage.com. Yet, because of the overly broad interpretation of the CDA, companies like it have been granted immunity from liability. CDA was intended to protect children from indecent material on the internet, but the law has been interpreted as a shield by those who profit from and promote the trafficking of children and women.

The "Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act" allows victims of sex trafficking to seek justice against websites that knowingly facilitate crimes against them by clarifying that CDA will no longer shield companies that promote this heinous crime. This bill will also ensure that state law enforcement may take legal action against businesses that violate federal sex trafficking laws.

The National Urban League joins anti-trafficking advocates, law enforcement and members of the faith community in urging you to pass this important legislation. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Marc H. Morial
President and Chief Executive Officer
National Urban League