

To: Attorney General Martha Coakley

From: Laurie Schlatter, citizen

Re: Hearing Oct. 19, 2010, on Online Sexual Exploitation

Dear Attorney General Coakley,

I wish to convey my gratitude to you and your office for holding the hearing Tuesday that examined and reviewed the online dangers which lead to human trafficking and sexual exploitation. I also wish to thank you for this opportunity to add my voice to the discussion.

Since I'm not in law enforcement or the social service sector, I need to take a moment to present my credentials: I've been a resident of Massachusetts for nearly 40 years; a newspaper copy editor for nearly 30 years; and a believer in Christ as Savior for 13 years.

My interest in the subject of human trafficking was ignited in early 2007, when the world took note of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in Great Britain. Research is my forte. I learned that slavery, through human trafficking, was alive and thriving in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, joining guns and drugs as the top three sources of illegal revenue. The toll on life in the developing world is staggering; its existence in the developed world often goes unnoticed by the unsuspecting public. In July and August 2008, I contacted your office with information about the New York attorney general's approach to stopping Internet Service Providers from carrying child pornography.

To the matter at hand: I work nights in Worcester and live in Holland, so I was able to get to Boston to hear the second half of testimony at the hearing Tuesday. It was enormously gratifying to hear firsthand the perspectives that I've read so much about. Your office received expert recommendations about legislation, public policy, social services and law enforcement. There was also mention of a task force.

**My contribution offered here** is to the potential effort of a public awareness campaign, as advocated by state police Sgt. Pi Heseltine in her testimony. I have an editor's mindset of targeting key points and an academic background that includes marketing. These are my thoughts:

- Any campaign to raise awareness has to be targeted to the different audiences and their ability to relate to the material. Since we're dealing with the pop culture of glamorized hypersexualization vs. the deadly realities of online exploitation, fliers, ads, and public service announcements (online, at movie theaters, malls and on MTV) must have words and images that capture the attention of young people and drive the message home in 10 words or less. I would imagine that Boston Police Sgt. Detective Donna Gavin has some

powerful ideas on what those words and images should be. (Think of the effectiveness of this PSA: “This is your brain. This is your brain on drugs.”)

- Organizations such as Verizon need to move beyond the rote provision of information about online safety. They must be challenged to communicate why that information is needed. The challenge is for them to use their technology, access and power to actually alert and inform young people about the real dangers of online predation and exploitation.
- Organizations such as NetChoice have the capability to blanket the Web with PSAs in such a campaign.
- The link to CyberTipline.com should be displayed prominently on every website as a public service. I think such a request from the attorney general’s office to organizations in Massachusetts would carry great weight.
- While the main target of a campaign should be to get kids’ attention, another audience is the general public: They need to know the dangers of online exploitation and about legislative initiatives in need of support that will help protect their progeny. Again, what gets the kids’ attention may not be so appropriate for their parents and grandparents, so the words and images should be adjusted accordingly.
- Sgt. Heseltine also advocated for more training in Central and Western Massachusetts to help those in the law enforcement recognize and respond appropriately to human trafficking cases disguised as prostitution and domestic violence. In addition to the work of the attorney general’s office, the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association also helps provide training for police departments; and the U.S. Department of Justice provides training on recognizing human trafficking, grant resources and victim assistance.
- The Verizon Foundation and others in the online communications field should be approached to help pay for this campaign.

Attorney General Coakley, in my field of work, as a newspaperwoman, I’m frequently disheartened when people fail to recognize, as Sgt. Heseltine put it, “that prostitution is not a victimless crime.” Venues such as your hearing are so critically important to raising awareness and fighting the evils of human trafficking and online predation. I welcomed the news of the hearing for its tremendous potential to help open people’s eyes and hearts to these dangers, and for its ability, on the heels of the Craigslist victory, to increase momentum in this fight.

Thank you for holding the hearing and for allowing public participation.

Sincerely,

Laurie Schlatter

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