

# Exodus Cry Supports California Bill to Make Buying a Child for Sex a Felony

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California Bill SB 1414 Will Be Introduced to Committee April 16, 2024

Exodus Cry supports California bill SB 1414, which will make it a felony to solicit, agree to engage in, or engage in any act of commercial sex with a minor. As an anti-trafficking organization which has spent 15 years educating millions of people on the need for effective anti-trafficking laws, Exodus Cry recognizes this bill as one of the most critical pieces of legislation needed to address the injustice of child sex trafficking. SB 1414 will help strengthen protections for the thousands of minor victims who are purchased for sex in the state.

This bipartisan bill was introduced by Senator Shannon Grove (R-Bakersfield), the senator who successfully passed SB 14 last September, which targets traffickers, making it a serious felony to traffic minors for sex. Last year's bill made headlines and sparked outrage after the Public Safety Committee blocked it, prompting Governor Newsom to step in and urge the Legislature to find a resolution. Afterward, more than half of the Legislature's 120 members signed on as co-authors of the bill.

Helen Taylor, Exodus Cry's Vice President of Impact, states about the new bill, "Those who purchase sex with a child are the root cause of child trafficking, creating the demand, and that's why SB 1414, which targets the buyer, is critical to ending this injustice."

California is a hot bed for human trafficking and consistently ranks number one in cases reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline. Human trafficking is among the world's fastest growing criminal enterprises and is estimated to be a \$150 billion-a-year global industry. It is a form of modern slavery that profits from the exploitation of the world's most vulnerable populations.

An adult purchasing sex from a child can never be considered consensual. Children cannot consent to their own exploitation, and a child being purchased for sex is, by law, a trafficking victim.

SB 1414 will give a voice to the children who have suffered from this horrific abuse. California has failed to hold sex buyers accountable who are inflicting lifelong trauma on child victims. It takes two criminals to commit the crime of child sex trafficking, a buyer and a seller. Buying sex from a child is a serious crime and should be a felony.

It is for these reasons that Exodus Cry, along with many other anti-trafficking organizations and survivors, strongly supports SB 1414 and urges the committee legislators to make purchasing a child for sex a felony, rather than a misdemeanor, in California.

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