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## **Prostitutes convicted nearly 7 times more often than “johns.”**

HARTFORD – The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) reports that the pattern of arrests and convictions for prostitution in virtually every Connecticut municipality may indicate the presence of systemic sexism in how sex workers are viewed and treated. The PCSW is basing this analysis on the annual report, just released, of The Trafficking in Persons Council (TIPC), a statutorily created body convened and chaired by the PCSW. (Full report [HERE](#).)

As concerns adults, both law enforcement and court procedures focus primarily on punishing sex workers, rather than buyers of sex (often known as “johns”). Since most sex workers are female and most buyers of sex are male, female sex workers bear the brunt of arrests and convictions. An analysis of records of the last 10 years shows that, in Connecticut, prostitutes are more than twice as likely as buyers of sex to be arrested, and nearly seven times more likely to be convicted.

The past decade saw 1,841 prostitution convictions vs. 269 convictions for buying sex from a prostitute. Of the people arrested for the crime, 3,577 were prostitutes and 1,378 were buyers. (While data available to the TIPC did not break down arrests and convictions by gender, it can safely be assumed that most prostitutes are women.)

In contrast to the treatment of adult women by the judicial system, much progress has been made recently in acknowledging that children under 18 involved in sex work are considered by law to be victims of human trafficking, rather than criminals. So while the law recognizes the victimization of prostituted minors, there remains the implication that women over 18 choose prostitution, rather than fall into it through coercion by someone with more power or the continuation of a pattern of childhood abuse.

“Currently, arrests concentrate first on the sex workers, and secondarily on the buyers of sex. It’s a basic premise of supply and demand: if you reduce the demand, you reduce the supply, which in this case, is the purchase of women and children for sex,” says Jillian Gilchrest, who is PCSW Senior Policy Analyst and Chair of TIPC.

To remedy this gender imbalance, the TIPC is making several recommendations to the Legislature, including focusing on the “demand” side of the crime of trafficking and prostitution by:

- Amending state statute *Sec. 54-36p*, which concerns forfeiture of money and property, so that patrons of sex are financially penalized, as prostitutes and pimps currently are.

“We’re recommending much-needed focus on the demand side,” says Gilchrest. “The legislature can do this by considering policies to help widen culpability of those buying sex.”

In addition, the TIPC is recommending strengthening current state law to ensure that when people purchase sex with a minor, they be charged with a felony crime.

According to TIPC member Tammy Sneed, Director of Gender Responsive Adolescent Services and co-chair of the Human Anti-Trafficking Response Team, “Connecticut’s current law allows those caught purchasing sex with a minor to avoid a felony charge if they can successfully argue that they were unsure of the child’s age. Having sex with a child is sexual abuse, plain and simple. The ‘mistake of age’ defense completely contradicts our efforts to protect children from predators.”

So, the TIPC is recommending that the State consider removing the “mistake of age” defense that lack of knowledge of a child’s underage status exculpates the buyer of sex by revising *Sec. 53a-83* “to remove the knowledge requirement and expressly prohibit a mistake of age defense when such other person is under the age of 18.”

In the last legislative session, the General Assembly broadened the TIPC’s charge to include child victims, and to that end, the council’s members want the State to address an inconsistency in current law: while in 2015 the State amended trafficking statutes to create a presumption that such children under 18 are victims of trafficking, it did not concomitantly raise the age under the statute re prostitution (*Sec. 53a-82*) from 16 to 18. In so doing, the law would ensure that minors under the age of 18 are treated as victims of commercial sexual exploitation, rather than as prostitutes.

The TIPC’s research has shown that trafficking of minors often takes place in hotels and motels, and so the TIPC also recommends that the State prevent and address trafficking and prostitution in such lodgings by:

- Prohibiting Connecticut hotels and motels from renting rooms hourly;
- Expanding on past public education efforts and victim assistance by requiring truck stops, liquor permittee premises and strip clubs to post information about human trafficking; and
- Requiring hotels, motels and similar lodgings to maintain records of room renters for a minimum of six months as a way of aiding trafficking investigations.

Ultimately, the work of the TIPC is to develop recommendations to strengthen state and local efforts to prevent trafficking, protect victims of trafficking, and prosecute traffickers of both adults and children.

“People need to realize that many of the same dynamics in the sexual victimization of children – which most people recognize as abhorrent – also play out with adult women,” says Gilchrest. “Our work aims to identify, address and end this horrible crime.”

The TIPC recently got funding from the Michael Bolton Charities to conduct a needs assessment on sex and labor trafficking in the state.

The TIPC members are:

### **State Agencies**

- The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, represented by *Jillian Gilcbrest, Senior Policy Analyst and Trafficking in Persons Council Chair*
- The Chief Public Defender, represented by *Deborah Del Prete Sullivan, Legal Counsel*
- The Chief State's Attorney, represented by *Tracey Kelley, Witness Protection Coordinator*
- The Child Advocate of Connecticut, represented by *Faith VosWinkel, Assistant Child Advocate*
- The Commissioner of Children and Families, represented by *Tammy Sneed, Director of Gender Responsive Adolescent Services and co-chair of the Human Anti-Trafficking Response Team*
- The Commissioner of Labor, represented by *Marla Shiller, Equal Employment Opportunity Manager*
- The Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services, represented by *Kimberly Karanda, Director of Statewide Services*
- The Commissioner of Public Health, represented by *DeVaughn Ward, Executive Assistant to the Commissioner*
- The Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection, represented by *Anthony Carter, Sargent, Connecticut State Police*
- The Commissioner of Social Services, represented by *Sylvia Gafford-Alexander, Program Director*
- The Judicial Branch, represented by *Linda J. Cimino, Director, Office of Victim Services*
- The Victim Advocate of Connecticut, represented by *Hakima Bey-Coon, Staff Attorney*

### **Public Members**

- *Andrew Anastasio, Jr., Chairman, Motor Transport Association of Connecticut, Inc.*
- *Debra Greenwood, President & CEO, The Center for Family Justice, Inc.*
- *Laura Cordes, Executive Director, and Deborah Heinrich, Director of Policy & Public Relations, Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence*
- *Mario Thomas Gaboury, Acting Dean and Professor, Henry C. Lee College of Criminal Justice & Forensic Sciences, University of New Haven*
- *Kara Hart, Esq., Staff Attorney, Greater Hartford Legal Aid*
- *Karen Jarmoc, Chief Executive Officer, and Joseph J. Froeblich, Coordinator for Law Enforcement, Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence*
- *Alicia R. Kinsman, Esq., Director and Managing Attorney of Immigration Legal Services and Leonela Cruz-Abuatl, Program Manager for Project Rescue, International Institute of Connecticut*
- *Beau Thurnauer, Deputy Chief, East Hartford Police Department, The Connecticut Police Chiefs Association*

*About the PCSW: The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women was formed in 1973 under Sec. 46a-1 of the Connecticut General Statutes to study and improve Connecticut women's economic security, health and safety; to promote consideration of qualified women to leadership positions and to work toward the elimination of gender discrimination. As a non-partisan arm of the General Assembly, the agency monitors, critiques and recommends changes to legislation in order to inform public policy, and assesses programs and practices in all State agencies for their effect on the state's women. The PCSW serves as a liaison between government and its diverse constituents, and convenes stakeholders, including the business, non-profit and educational communities, local governments, and the media, in order to promote awareness of women's issues.*