



# Attorney General Doug Peterson

# News Release

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## **HUMAN TRAFFICKING TESTIMONY DRAWS FROM BROAD COALITION**

State Capitol – The Legislature’s Judiciary Committee heard from a broad coalition of supporters in favor of LB294 introduced by Sen. Jim Scheer of Norfolk.

LB294 strengthens Nebraska’s laws against the sex trafficking of young girls and adopts recommendations made by the Governor’s Task Force on Human Trafficking.

The bill is a priority of Attorney General Doug Peterson who participated in committees organized by former State Senator Amanda McGill, who helped bring trafficking to the Legislature’s attention.

Peterson stated that he was amazed by the compassion and efforts of service providers and law enforcement but found that Nebraska lacked a “hammer” to prosecute traffickers. LB294 is that hammer. Peterson stated that the bill is motivated by compassion for the young victims of human trafficking who are repeatedly treated as commodities.

“Passing LB294 is Nebraska’s next step in providing justice to victims of this deplorable crime,” says Peterson.

The bill increases penalties against traffickers, allows for forfeiture of their assets for the purpose of funding services for victims, and allows juvenile courts to ensure that victims of trafficking actually receive service.

Nebraska’s existing human trafficking law created unintended consequences in which victims do not necessarily receive services and are unable to break away from a manipulative cycle of abuse.

According to Officer Amber Schlote of the Omaha Police Department’s Vice Unit, since 2013 every juvenile victim of sex trafficking has attempted to run from Child Protective Services within 48 hours of being rescued by law enforcement. The Omaha Child Exploitation Task Force has been responsible for the recovery of over

20 sexually exploited juveniles since 2010 and has received reports of two additional suspected juveniles within the last week.

Deputy Douglas County Attorney, Nicole Brundo, testified on behalf of the Nebraska County Attorney's Association. Brundo testified about four juvenile cases in Douglas County from 2014. She noted that Nebraska's current human trafficking/juvenile prostitution law skipped over the rehabilitation options available through the Justice system.

Linda Burkle of the Omaha Salvation Army further testified that two recent juvenile victims of sex trafficking referred to the Salvation Army have chosen to return to their traffickers instead of participating in the rehabilitation services offered by the Salvation Army because they were not required to do so under current law.

The bill had over a dozen testifiers in support, only the Nebraska Defense Attorneys Association opposed the bill.

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