

News Release

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Bill Raising Human Trafficking Awareness Passes Senate Unanimously

*Bill will publicize Human Trafficking Hotline number: **1 888-373-3888***

Salem – Priority legislation of Representative Brent Barton was positively received in the Oregon Senate this morning. Senator Diane Rosenbaum carried HB 3623 on the floor where it received unanimous support. Rosenbaum is one of three chief sponsors, joined by Representatives Jefferson Smith and Barton.

“Human trafficking is the forced exploitation of a person for profit,” explained Rosenbaum, Co-Chair of the Oregon Women’s Health and Wellness Alliance. “While many believe this form of modern day slavery only happens overseas this tragic exploitation of women and children is a growing problem here in Oregon. This bill takes the first step by raising awareness.”

HB3623 allows the Oregon Liquor Control Commission to include human trafficking informational stickers, supplied by a non-profit, along with license renewal letters. These letters are sent yearly to more than 11,000 establishments, and including the informational sticker will not incur any additional cost to the state. Businesses will receive information stressing the importance of displaying the sticker to their patrons and can choose where to display it.

“A drug dealer sells his drugs once, but a young woman can be forced to bring back money over and over again” said Barton.

Representative Smith argues that the secrecy and danger of illicit trafficking circles pose a great barrier to eliminating human trafficking.

“In the 1980s, the elimination of domestic violence faced a similar challenge: nobody talked about it. And nobody investigated it. And people didn't know where to find help,” said Smith.

“By publicizing the national hotline number: 1 888-373-3888, victims and witnesses will have a resource to report crimes and find help,” explain Barton.

The Polaris Project (www.polarisproject.org) began the hotline number in December 2007 and has already received more than 14,000 calls, leading to several arrests and victims finding help. HB 3623 will now go to Governor Kulongoski for his signature.

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