



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

## Serino Seeks to Combat Sex Trafficking

SUSAN SERINO May 29, 2018

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ALBANY, NY—Following a NY Post exposé regarding the scourge of sex trafficking here in New York, Senator Sue Serino today announced the introduction of legislation aimed at increasing awareness to prevent victimization and holding perpetrators accountable to more effectively deter sex trafficking crimes.

“Sex trafficking is an epidemic that has flown under the radar for far too long and it’s not just a ‘big city’ issue. It is happening right here in the Hudson Valley, and at alarming rates,” said Senator Sue Serino. “By failing to properly acknowledge the issue and updating our laws to hold these monsters accountable, we are failing the victims, many of whom are only children. These bills can effectively deter these crimes, will play a significant role in shining a light on the issue and will help to ensure that those who traffic in sex are being held responsible for their abhorrent crimes. I urge my colleagues in both houses to make these bills a priority before the end of the legislative session.”

According to the series published by the NY Post, in 2017, the NYPD saved one victim per week while working 265 sex trafficking cases resulting in the arrests of 228 pimps—more

than twice as many cases as the year prior.

A recent report by LoHud, notes that New York ranks 5th in the nation for human trafficking, with sex trafficking making up the majority of those crimes. The same story quotes the director of a Hudson Valley human trafficking program who states clearly that, "Human trafficking is occurring in every corner of every neighborhood in the Hudson Valley."

Senator Serino has introduced two bills aimed at addressing this issue. First, far too many traffickers are escaping justice because current law requires sentences to be served concurrently—or at the same time—effectively allowing perpetrators to get off scot-free for some of their offenses when they're convicted of multiple sex crimes. The bill she recently introduced, along with Assemblyman Fred Thiele (S. 8604) would change that by giving judges the power to order that those convicted of two or more felony sex offenses, including sex trafficking, serve their sentences back-to-back, or consecutively.

Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele, Jr. stated, "Sex crimes, particularly those committed against a child, are some of the most deplorable acts imaginable. The perpetrators of these crimes are often sex traffickers who commit a litany of sex offenses. Recent reports indicate that the occurrence of sex trafficking crimes, especially in New York, is significantly increasing. While the victims of these cruel and horrific acts are faced with a lifetime of suffering, the law currently allows some convicted predators to serve their sentences concurrently. I am pleased to join with Senator Serino in sponsoring this legislation in the New York State

Assembly to allow judges to order multiple sentences to be served consecutively, ensuring that justice is more properly served to the perpetrators of these heinous acts.”

“Sex traffickers prey on the most vulnerable among us, too often ruthlessly targeting troubled teens and defenseless children. Our law needs to be strengthened to reflect the seriousness of these crimes, to more effectively deter these predators and to remove them from our streets,” Serino continued. “Concurrent sentences allow monsters who traffic in sex to avoid justice and could heighten the possibility that they will reoffend. Judges should have the ability to hold people who commit multiple sex crimes like these traffickers accountable.”

In order to raise awareness for this pervasive issue, Senator Serino also introduced a bill (S. 8535/A. 10871), along with Assemblyman Joseph Lentol, that would direct the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles to establish a sex trafficking awareness and prevention program in conjunction with the Commissioners of Criminal Justice Services and Transportation to educate drivers with commercial motor vehicle licenses on the warning signs of sex trafficking.

Too often, because victims live in fear or under the control of their traffickers, many mistake sex trafficking victims for willing prostitutes, making the signs of trafficking especially hard to identify. To make matters worse, traffickers are known to keep victims constantly on the move in an effort to evade law enforcement, in many cases utilizing truck stops and rest areas to avoid detection. For this reason, the nonprofit Truckers Against Trafficking has

recognized that with quality education regarding the signs of trafficking, truck drivers can play a unique role in identifying and reporting trafficking cases. To date, the organization has empowered truck drivers with an educational program leading to the identification of over 1,000 victims.

The bill aims to build on this work by ensuring that New York's commercial drivers can become effective partners in combatting these heinous crimes.