

Mayor _____

Dear Mayor _____,

As a concerned citizen and community member, I urge you to address the issue of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation in our community. I specifically want you to take a leadership role in addressing the customers of prostitution who are the root cause of this problem, and who are rarely held accountable.

Our own neighborhood is no exception, as you can see from the recent news articles at www.ncjwcns.org/st-resources. I am contacting you because as a leader and public servant, you have the ability to deter sexual exploitation in Illinois by focusing public and criminal justice system attention on the “demand” side of the sex trade.

PA 98-1013, formerly SB 3558, signed into law on August 21, 2014, effective January 1, 2015, created the Specialized Services for Survivors of Human Trafficking Fund to provide specialized services designed to address the needs associated with prostitution and human trafficking. At the same time, it also provides for a *funding stream to local municipalities* that make arrests of those soliciting a sex act.

For this new law to be successfully implemented, all levels of law enforcement (i.e., local police departments) need to significantly shift their focus from punishing prostituted people to arresting and punishing the buyers, so the people who buy sex and fuel the sex trade pay for the harm they cause. Data for Illinois from the past five years shows far more local arrests have been made for prostitution than solicitation.

Your help is needed to help end demand. Prostitution could not exist without the people who buy sex.

Customers as well as pimps and traffickers, who profit from prostitution, continue to be largely ignored by law enforcement, while those who are purchased are arrested again and again. This is contrary to local research with men who buy sex, which suggests that ‘johns’ can be deterred from buying sex by real consequences, such as prosecutions and fines of \$1,000 or more.

As a community, we need to focus on ending the demand for paid sex, by arresting and charging those who buy, or seek to buy, sex. Providing prostituted individuals with resources and social services is vital for them to be able to exit prostitution. But as long as men who purchase sex feel that they can do so with impunity, vulnerable children and adults will continue to be recruited and coerced into the sex trade. Our community must make it clear that purchasing sex is never justified, no matter a person’s circumstances, and whenever sex is purchased, an industry is supported that profits off of sexual exploitation and harm.

Your leadership can be a vehicle for *awareness raising, advocacy, and critical fundraising* on this important issue. I ask for your support and participation in helping end the demand for sexual exploitation and for creating real, lasting change.

(signature)

Date: _____

(name)

(address)