



DAVID STEFFEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 4TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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Contact: Rep. Steffen
(608) 237-9104

Assembly Passes Bill to Empower Victims of Child Sex Trafficking *Bipartisan proposal is part of Speaker's Task Force on Human Trafficking*

Madison, WI – Today, the State Assembly passed bipartisan legislation that will enhance the legal options for victims of child trafficking. The bill, authored by State Representative David Steffen (R-Howard), is part of the Speaker's Task Force on Human Trafficking.

This session, the Task Force met around the state to gather input from community leaders, law enforcement and advocacy groups to develop legislative solutions to combat human trafficking in Wisconsin. The Green Bay Police Department was among those who testified. Detective Pakkala provided statistics on the prevalence of trafficking in Green Bay and remarked that the city is “flourishing” with this type of activity.

The proposal led by Rep. Steffen is twofold and provides victims of child trafficking greater opportunity to pursue civil action in our court system. The proposal:

- Increases the civil action-related statute of limitations for child trafficking victims to age 35. Under current law, victims of child trafficking are limited to a three-year period to bring forth a civil action. This change brings into alignment the statute of limitations for child trafficking with the current statute of limitations for sexual assault of a child.
- Allows child trafficking victims to pursue civil action regardless of whether someone has been criminally convicted in their case. Under current law, a victim of child trafficking may only pursue civil action if there has been a criminal prosecution or conviction.

“Sadly, throughout the course of this Task Force, we learned just how prevalent the issue of trafficking is in our state. As lawmakers, we are responsible for shaping the laws that rule this state and it’s clear that more needs to be done legislatively to address this issue. While there isn’t a simple solution, certainly empowering survivors of trafficking to exercise the full extent of the law is an important piece to ensuring justice is served,” said Rep. Steffen.

The bill will next move on for consideration by the State Senate before becoming available for the Governor’s signature.

For more information please contact the office of Representative Steffen at (608)237-9104 or by email at Rep.Steffen@legis.wisconsin.gov.

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