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Board of Supervisors Approves Funding to Help Victims of Child Sex Trafficking

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved a two-year, \$200,000 grant for the non-profit organization, Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST) to coordinate much needed victim services such as crisis intervention, mental and physical health services, education and training and legal assistance for youngsters ages 12-24.

Funding for the grant, proposed by Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, comes from the County Children's Trust Fund, which is accrued from the \$4 fee applied for certified copies of birth certificates. The CAST program would work in partnership with the Los Angeles County Probation Department and the Department of Children and Family Services, the agencies currently creating a county-wide systematic approach to use when they encounter children caught up in the sex trade.

The CAST plan will be piloted in the Second District, which has one of the largest documented concentrations of child trafficking cases in the county. Sex trafficking is a \$32 billion dollar business increasingly run by gangs. The Federal Bureau of Investigation estimates that 100,000 children in the United States are sold for sex each year, with the average age of entry into the sex trade industry being 12 to 14.

"The sexual exploitation of children in Los Angeles is growing at a rapid pace," said Kay Buck, executive director of CAST. "Often, these children come from abusive homes, foster care and have mental and substance abuse problems. They also carry records due to the crimes they are forced to commit when they are exploited. Helping these

children requires a coordinated response by all the agencies who are working with them. I am grateful for the vision and leadership of Supervisor Ridley-Thomas and the L.A. County Board of Supervisors. Together, we can and will find a way to keep the children in LA safe from exploitation.”

“CAST’s work helping all victims of human trafficking is internationally recognized,” said Supervisor Ridley-Thomas. “Their efforts in Los Angeles will help set a standard for how we help and support these children who are victimized by unscrupulous adults. I look forward to seeing their work in action in the Second District.”

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