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Contact: Lisa Richardson, 213-361-6980
Email: lrichardson@bos.lacounty.gov

Contact: Lorenza Munoz, 213-458-6279
Email: lmunoz@bos.lacounty.gov

Board of Supervisors Supports City of LA in Supreme Court Case

Los Angeles County is backing the City of Los Angeles in its effort to crack down on motels and hotels that are magnets for criminal activity, including child sex trafficking.

On Tuesday, the Board of Supervisors agreed to join in an amicus brief in support of the city in a case that will be heard by the U.S. Supreme Court. *Los Angeles v Patel* will determine if the Los Angeles Police Department can check motel registries on demand or penalize motel owners for refusing to cooperate without allowing the motel owner a chance to contest the inspection before a judge. In December, the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, ruled against the city, saying the ordinance violated the Fourth Amendment's ban on unreasonable searches.

Law enforcement agencies throughout the county have witnessed the use of these motels to facilitate the sale of children for sex along prostitution tracks. At least 70 cities across the nation, including Atlanta, Denver, Las Vegas, Minneapolis, St. Louis, San Diego, San Francisco and Seattle, have similar laws. Courts in other parts of the country have upheld similar laws.

With ordinances like this, traffickers, predators and drug dealers are less likely to use these motels if they know guest information can be made available to police on a moment's notice. The prevalence of the internet is pushing the sale of commercial sex from the streets, behind the doors of motels and hotels.

The buying and selling of women and children for sex is a multi-billion industry increasingly run by gangs. These women and children are subjected to extremely violent and traumatic acts that too often result in death at a young age.

“While we recognize the need to respect the 4th amendment and we must keep a vigilant eye on potential abuse, these surprise guest-register inspections play an important role in cleaning up neighborhoods that have been living under the threat of violence, drug dealing and blight that many of these motels perpetuate,” said Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, who co-authored the motion with Supervisor Don Knabe. “We are in solidarity with the City of Los Angeles in their efforts to keep blight out of our communities.”

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