





THE ISSUE: AB 1276 Child witnesses: human trafficking (Santiago, D-Los Angeles) would authorize a minor 17 years of age or younger, in human trafficking cases, to testify at trial out of the presence of the defendant and jury using closed-circuit television. (Support)

## **HISTORY & BACKGROUND**

The court can provide discretion to employ alternative court procedures to protect the rights of a child witness, the rights of the defendant, and the integrity of the judicial system. In a criminal proceeding, upon written notice by the prosecutor made at least three days prior to the date of the preliminary hearing or trial date may order that the testimony of a minor 13 years of age or younger to be taken by closed-circuit television out of the presence of judge, jury, defendant/s and attorneys.

Testifying in court can be traumatic for victims of human trafficking who are minors. Facing the perpetrator in court and being asked to recall horrifying details of the crime can cause severe emotional distress. Facing the perpetrator personally generally makes effective communication in court difficult and it can lead to a minor fearing retaliation and refusing to testify. AB 1276 will ensure that victims of human trafficking crimes, from 13-17 years of age, are protected from experiencing additional trauma.

Human Trafficking has become a serious issue in our state, with people being bought, sold and smuggled. This modern day slavery affects people of all races, religions and backgrounds, and can have long lasting effects on victims and their families.

## "All of us are called (by God) to be free, all are called to be sons and daughters, and each, according to his or her own responsibilities, is called to combat modern forms of enslavement. From every people, culture and religion, let us join our

forces."

—Pope Francis

## CHURCH TEACHING

"Human Trafficking is a horrific crime against the basic dignity and rights of the human person. In the end, we must work together—church, state and community—to make whole the survivors of this crime; and to ensure that, one day soon, trafficking of human persons vanishes the face of the earth."

—U.S. Bishops, Human Trafficking, 2007

- Trafficking is the fasted growing and second largest criminal enterprise behind drugs and gun smuggling.
- Average age of entry into commercial sex industries is between 12-14 years of age.
- ▶ U.S. State Department estimates that 600,000 800,000 men, women and children are trafficked across borders each year. Approximately 80% are female and up to 50% are minors.
- This bill would protect minors from facing additional trauma and give them a better chance of reintegrating back into society.