



### **Human Rights Committee – Introduced**

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**Human Trafficking Position**  
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### **Position Statement:**

*SIYAC supports legislation pertaining to human trafficking*

### **Position**

The State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council supports the passage and full implementation of a human trafficking bill aimed at enhancing the treatment of survivors after being rescued.

### **Current Situation**

Currently in the state of Iowa, human trafficking is a crime that is increasing in frequency with a growth rate that reached just over 71 percent between 2011 and 2013. Human trafficking is a crime wherein a trafficker preys on people in need, abuses them, and then sells them. In Iowa, human trafficking charges are less severe than drug cases; a trafficker faces a maximum 5 year prison sentence, and if the survivor is a minor the trafficker faces a 10 year prison sentence. Human trafficking survivors between the ages of 16 and 17 years old also face jail time for prostitution and can be tried in adult court. If victims are younger than 16, they may go to juvenile court and have the potential to be put on probation. The survivors are essentially criminalized for being held against their will (Gazette, 2014).

### **Rationale**

Human trafficking is a bigger problem than it may seem. In 2012, the National Human Trafficking Resource Center received 82 calls from Iowa, and this past year they received 54 calls from January to June alone. These numbers only represent the victims that could get to a phone, not the countless others that are still hidden. Survivors of human trafficking undergo a myriad of mental and physical abuses. Putting survivors of human trafficking in jail is not the answer; they deserve the chance to take control of their own lives in the freedom of a treatment center.

Iowa should address the needs of survivors rather than imprisoning them. Survivors of human trafficking deserve access to adequate legal defenses and safe havens to recuperate after undergoing such trauma.

### **Recommended Action**

Iowa's rising human trafficking issue demands new legislation to ensure that victims are getting the help they need and traffickers are brought to justice. We urge the Iowa General Assembly to consider passing legislation that pertains to helping survivors of human trafficking. Such legislation will provide the necessary treatment to survivors so that they are given the opportunity to live a healthy, safe lifestyle outside the realm of human trafficking.