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District Attorney Denounces Dismantling of Human Trafficking Bill AB 379 by Assembly Public Safety Committee

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) today strongly denounced the gutting of her sponsored human trafficking bill, AB 379, during a hearing of the Assembly Public Safety Committee on Tuesday. The bill, which aimed to make the buying a 16 or 17-year-old child for sex a felony offense in California, was stripped of that critical provision in committee, despite overwhelming public support and increasing bipartisan concern over the exploitation of minors.

“This is a betrayal of the most vulnerable children in our state,” DA Stephan said “For over a decade, I have fought to make sure that those who buy children for sex are held fully accountable under the law. Buying children who under the law cannot consent to sex, can only be described as slavery. By gutting AB 379, the Assembly Public Safety Committee has sent a chilling message that the exploitation of children does not merit a serious penalty. Buying a 16-year-old for sex causes years of pain, disease and trauma, yet gets the same or less of a punishment in California than spray painting wall. This is not just a policy disagreement—it is an inhumane failure.”

The bill had garnered broad support from victim advocates, law enforcement, and community organizations, and was considered a key step forward in California’s ongoing fight against human trafficking. The bill’s author, Assemblymember Maggie Krell, has decades of experience fighting human trafficking and the bill relies on solid research that demonstrates that age 16 is the average age of recruitment of human trafficking victims in San Diego.

See video of the news conference announcing support of the bill, [here](#).

DA Stephan has been a leading voice in the fight against human trafficking in California and across the nation. She pioneered the first human trafficking Special Victims Unit in San Diego County. Her office has prosecuted numerous high-profile trafficking cases and has worked with survivors to advocate for stronger laws that recognize the true harm caused by those who fuel the demand for the exploitation of children.

“California should be leading the nation in protecting children, not dragging its feet,” Stephan said. “We will not stop fighting. Survivors deserve better. Our children deserve better.”

AB 379 now goes to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, where there is a possibility that the bill can be amended again as it continues its journey. DA Stephan vows to continue pressing for legislative action that will close the loophole that doesn’t hold buyers of minor children responsible.

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About the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office

The San Diego County DA’s Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.

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