



## MEDIA BRIEF

On February 9, 2021, Senator Scott Wiener introduced another bill, SB 357, that fails to protect black women who are experiencing human trafficking in our community. SB 357 decriminalizes the act of loitering with the intent to commit prostitution. [Bill Text - SB-357 Crimes: loitering for the purpose of engaging in a prostitution offense. \(ca.gov\)](#)

The bill which passed the Senate on 6/1/21 and the Assembly on 7/13/21 has falsely promised to protect black women from police bias claiming that there's a disproportionate number of black women arrested in California for loitering/soliciting because police are targeting them unfairly instead of telling the true story which is that black women and girls ARE disproportionately trafficked in our state and nation. In fact even though black women only represent 6.5% ([U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States](#)) of the nation's population they represent 40% of those who are trafficked ([Rights4Girls - Racial-Disparities-FactSheet\\_ Jan-2021.pdf \(rights4girls.org\)](#)). At this core of this disproportionately is a lack of access to sustainable careers, mental health services, education, and safe housing.

We are deeply saddened that Senator Wiener has distorted these numbers; capitalizing on current anti-police sentiment and leveraging the vulnerability of black women to push the "Sex Work is Work" agenda. This bill and agenda pushes black women into a deeper state of dependency on a violent, racist and misogynist industry without any thought of the services they need to exit from exploitation.

It is ironic that Senator Wiener, a white male, and many of his supporters appear to show an interest in the wellbeing of exploited black women and girls. Especially on the heels of the approval of SB 145, his bill which was signed into law August 2020, and was highly detrimental to black Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC).

SB 145 rewrote the 290 sex registrant penal code so that children as young as 14 now have to testify in court that sex with a 24 year old buyer is NOT consensual. In California there are 41,655 sex offenders [California Sex Offender Registry | State of California - Department of Justice - Office of the Attorney General](#), 30% of those offenders abused black children between the ages of 11-17 ([www.kidsdata.org](#)).

When Senator Wiener's office was contacted by Love Never Fails and asked if he tested his bill against human trafficking cases and he advised he had not. In fact, the entire bill was built on the experience of one couple and analyzed based on 6 additional cases none of which included human trafficking of children.

SB 357 is the same type of patch work storyboarding. Even the support garnered from NGOs isn't considering the needs of all survivors in California. One of the state's leading anti-trafficking nonprofits has chosen to endorse this bill because they can provide urgent survivor services such as housing, education, job training, and childcare for the survivors in their County and don't rely as heavily on police intervention as a result. But what about the rest of California's Counties where agencies who serve trafficked and pimped youth are currently beyond capacity, with dozens of children on long waitlists unable to be treated for up to months at a time?

At Love Never Fails we are proponents of an Equality Model that criminalizes buyers and exploiters and refers survivors to services such as mental health care, housing, workforce development and legal services. Love Never Fails is a California certified CyberSecurity Pre-Apprenticeship Program, Department of Rehabilitation agency, and CalJOBS Trainer. Our goal is to empower and equip survivors for careers in safe and sustainable industries as an alternative to sex work. Love Never Fails co-chairs Oakland's Violence Prevention Coalition Gender Based Violence Group and we sit on anti-trafficking coalitions for 5 Counties including SF Coalition Against Human Trafficking (SFCAHT), AC United, Contra Costa Human Trafficking Task Force, South Bay Coalition

to End Human Trafficking (SBEHT), and San Mateo Human Trafficking Initiative. We are eager to see legislation and funding that empowers NGOs in every County to roll out the necessary services to divert survivors away from sex work not toward it. We believe adamantly that those who are advocating for the "Sex Work Is Work" agenda are doing so from place of privilege and dismissing the harsh realities of street prostitution.

"As a survivor of human trafficking, I find that the SB 357 bill that Senator Scott Wiener recently introduced, although likely introduced with good intent, falls short when it comes to protecting and defending some of the most vulnerable populations. When I read the bill I was disheartened because instead of sharing the true fact that girls and women of color are disproportionately affected by human trafficking in our nation, the Senator made it seem like this group simply gets judged and targeted because they are minding their own business and standing on corners, and that's just simply not the case. I believe this bill is attempting to use the plight of exploited individuals to push the "sex work is work" agenda, an agenda that does not speak for nor defend the rights of those forced into the industry. People get into sex work for the same reason people are vulnerable to exploitation, because there is a need somewhere that is not being met. The need can be anything, whether spiritual, emotional, material, or psychological. People, like me, who are forced into the sex trafficking industry go through unimaginable pain and trauma. We are raped, beaten, tortured, our identity is stolen, we are threatened, and often killed. If this bill is enacted in our community, then more people like me and like so many others who have been exploited, will become even more invisible and fall between the cracks that have already

claimed so many lives. This bill and the “sex work is work” agenda does not speak for me, it does not speak for survivors of human trafficking, nor does it take into account the growing issue of sexual exploitation.” - Sable Horton, Survivor, Founder, Shades of Beauty, and 2021 SF Coalition Against Human Trafficking Abolitionist of the Year

Love Never Fails urges you to stand with survivors and advocates in opposing this misguided bill which will decrease criminalization of pimps and sex buyers, increase

demand and ultimately force more survivors of human trafficking deeper into an industry where they will continue to experience torture, racism, sexism, and violence.

On 8/16/21 this bill goes to the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Please TAKE [THE 5 STEPS TO OPPOSE SB 357](#) by 8/15/21.

## AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW:



**Vanessa Russell** - Founder and Executive Director, Love Never Fails, 2020 SF Coalition Against Trafficking Abolitionist of the Year, Peralta Colleges Professor of Computer Science and Information Technology, Oakland Violence Prevention Coalition Gender Based Violence Co-Chair



**Sable Horton** - Survivor, Founder, Shades of Beauty, Founder, Agape Design Expressions, and 2021 SF Coalition Against Human Trafficking Abolitionist of the Year