



87th Legislative Session

Texas PTA Legislative Priority

CHILD AND YOUTH TRAFFICKING

Support legislation that waives criminal responsibility for children and youth when criminal activity results from exploitation by a trafficker. Monitor the state's 2019 clemency initiative for victims of human trafficking.

BACKGROUND

- According to the [U.S. Department of Justice](#), sex trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act is 17 or younger.
- There is no single profile for trafficking victims; trafficking occurs to adults and minors in rural, suburban, or urban communities across the country.
- Children are potential victims of both commercial and sexual abuse by traffickers due to lack of education, poverty, lack of employment opportunities, and an expanding globalized sex industry.
- The Federal Bureau of Investigation classified human trafficking as the third largest and fastest growing criminal enterprise in the world. [Anti-sex trafficking groups](#) estimate that it's a \$10 billion business in America annually.
- According to the [Texas Attorney General's office](#), there are 79,000 victims of youth and minor sex trafficking in Texas at any given time.
- According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, Texas accounted for 1,080 out of the 11,500 human trafficking cases reported in 2019, trailing only behind California as the state with the most reported cases of trafficking.
- In preparation for the 2019 legislative session, Governor Abbott released two plans to combat sex and human trafficking – [Preventing Crime, Protecting Texans, Punishing Criminals](#) and [Safeguarding, Securing, and Serving](#).
- During the 2019 legislative session, [Governor Abbott vetoed a bill](#) decriminalizing prostitution for children because he said it would create “unintended consequences” – like encouraging traffickers to use underage prostitutes so they would not get arrested. He also vetoed House Bill 3078, which sought to establish a separate clemency panel to review cases of jailed abuse survivors and sex-trafficking victims.
- However, in February 2020, the governor announced a new [clemency application](#) allowing people convicted of crimes due to being trafficked to tell the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles about their experiences with human trafficking or domestic violence. The board makes recommendations to the governor, who can pardon inmates. Of the new application, Governor Abbott said, “It offers a second chance to survivors with criminal convictions resulting from their abuse or exploitation.”