



STATE OF INDIANA
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To Whom It May Concern,

As an inaugural member of the National Association of Attorneys General Human Trafficking committee and a co-chair of the Indiana protection for Abused and Trafficked Humans (IPATH), I write this letter in support of Ascent 121 and the projected establishment of residential and community-based services for sexually exploited adolescent females.

There is a tremendous need for residential and community based services for trafficked victims in Indiana. The overall mission of Ascent 121 compliments the efforts of the Indiana Protection for Abused and Trafficked Humans Task Force (IPATH) and will provide Indiana with a valuable service in assisting human trafficking victims. According to the latest State Department Trafficking in Persons Report, human trafficking is a \$150 billion global industry. It is believed to be the fastest growing and second largest criminal activity, worldwide. Since 2005, there have been more than 134 human trafficking investigations in Indiana, most of which involved sexual trafficking. The average age at which girls in the United States are first pulled into commercial sex is 12-14. Furthermore, a justice department study found that 83% of trafficking victims in the U.S. were U.S. citizens. Another study found that more than 85% of identified commercially sexually exploited children were already being served in that state's department of child services programs.

Over 60 nonprofit, government, faith based and community groups have joined our efforts in Indiana through IPATH to fight human trafficking in the areas of law enforcement, victim assistance, training and outreach. The establishment of Ascent 121 will take victim assistance efforts to the next level, offering a specialized placement option for victimized youth while they work through the core treatment areas that place them at risk of re-victimization. Specialized placement is crucial to victim recovery given the unique treatment needs of this population including, but not limited to, trauma-bonding and a very specific negative peer culture.

It has been our experience that those involved with the founding and development of Ascent 121 initiatives have demonstrated both a commitment to, and investment in, serving this unique and vulnerable population. Their efforts in developing Ascent 121 are an important step towards achieving Indiana's ongoing rescue and recovery objectives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Abigail Lawlis Kuzma", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Abigail Lawlis Kuzma
IPATH Co-Chair Designee
Director and Chief Counsel of Consumer Protection and Senior Policy Advisor
Office of Indiana Attorney General