



Media Contact:
Sharon Simpson Joseph, Esq.
sjoseph@youth-spark.org
404.613.4609

youthSpark, Inc. Supports Efforts to Amend the Communications Decency Act of 1996 to Help Fight Demand for Child Sex Trafficking

--Georgia Attorney General Sam Olens Continues Leadership of Ending Demand and Signs on to Proposal--

ATLANTA (July 24, 2013) – youthSpark, Inc. is thrilled to express our enthusiastic support for the proposal of the National Association of Attorneys General asking Congress to amend the federal Communications Decency Act (CDA). This amendment would grant criminal jurisdiction to state and local governments to combat the use of online classified ad sites, which have knowingly created a marketplace for prostitution, and consequently, child sex trafficking. We commend Georgia Attorney General Sam Olens for his continued efforts to stop the demand for prostituted children in the state of Georgia as he signs on to the proposal.

This change is particularly timely because sex trafficking has largely moved from the streets to the Internet. The CDA has been interpreted to provide civil immunity and state criminal immunity to Internet content providers, even if the intention of those providers is to profit from illegal activity. Such sites produce millions of dollars per month in revenue. In fact, a recent AIM group report estimated that backpage, the largest of these sites, is now making \$5 million per month in revenue from sex ads.

The amendment proposed by the National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG) is narrow and surgical, adding just two words to the existing law, “or state.” Through implementing this change, Congress would extend criminal jurisdiction, currently held only by the federal government, to state and local governments.

Federal prosecutions have not occurred because it is difficult to establish that these sites are knowingly promoting child sex trafficking or interstate prostitution. With the current application of the CDA, a gap exists in criminal enforcement regarding prostitution promoted on the Internet. As a result, the lack of enforcement of Internet prostitution has become an enabler and facilitator of child sex trafficking.

Absent interstate travel, federal property, or the involvement of a minor, prostitution is not a federal crime. Yet, under the CDA, online classified ad sites have knowingly created an online marketplace for prostitution with child sex trafficking emerging as a predictable but hidden part of that marketplace.

The victims of prostitution all live in a local community somewhere. These are state and local crimes. Yet, currently state and local governments are precluded from taking criminal action against these sites.

By maintaining civil immunity, mainstream online content providers will not be affected and innovation on the Internet will be preserved. Once the amendment is enacted, state and local governments will be able to criminally investigate whether these organizations and their management are culpable for aiding and abetting prostitution or other similar crimes.

We commend the vision and leadership of the Attorneys General, and urge Congress to act.

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About youthSpark, Inc.

youthSpark is an ever-growing movement of pioneers, youth and adults alike, committed to ending child sex trafficking through the power of prevention, direct service prevention programs, youth-empowered education, research and advocacy. We aim to transform the lives of children who have been exploited, abused and neglected, because NO CHILD wakes up at 16 and chooses to be prostituted. youthSpark uses the economic model of supply and demand to combat this heinous form of child abuse by reducing the number of victims in our communities, disabling the demand for prostituted youth, and by educating and empowering young people to join the movement. For more information, visit www.youth-spark.org.