

2014 Resolution No: 1

Submitted by: Mayor Martin J. Walsh, Boston, Massachusetts

**Combatting Commercial Sexual Exploitation Through
Comprehensive Demand Enforcement And Prevention**

WHEREAS, the nation's mayors are committed to public safety, health and well-being, and economic growth within their cities; and

WHEREAS, commercial sexual exploitation – which includes sex trafficking – is growing throughout the U.S., thriving in cities across geographic and socio-demographic variability, significantly threatening the safety and well-being of the children and vulnerable adults being purchased, families of buyers and the buyers themselves, legitimate businesses, and our communities; and

WHEREAS, up to 300,000 of our nation's children are at risk of being commercially sexually exploited each year, often coming from the foster care system, with thirteen being the average age a girl enters prostitution; and

WHEREAS, the industry is especially harmful for those being purchased, with the majority of women in prostitution fitting the federal definition of being “trafficked” and wanting to leave if they felt they had alternative choices for survival or didn't fear retribution by pimps; and

WHEREAS, criminal syndicate, gang, and drug dealer involvement in prostitution within and among cities is increasing nationwide, with pimps making \$260,000-\$1,700,000/year; and

WHEREAS, sex buyers drive the entire illegal sex industry, with so-called “johns” constituting 15 percent of the US adult male population; with the majority having partners and “high-frequency sex buyers” earning on average \$120,000/year; and

WHEREAS, it is illegal to purchase sex in the United States (except in six counties in Nevada), yet prostituted individuals are arrested at a nationwide rate double that of those buying (with the rate in some cities being as high 10:1, seller to buyer), while pimps perceive any criminal intervention as “low risk;” and

WHEREAS, there is a growing body of evidence that targeting sex buyers is a pragmatic, effective way to dry up the commercial sex industry; and

WHEREAS, 80 percent of purchased sex is brokered online, with nearly 45,000 new ads posted each week in the escort services section just of Backpage.com, where young girls are being advertised; and

WHEREAS, doctors and health professionals assembled by the Institute of Medicine issued *Confronting Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States*, which suggests “a particular emphasis on deterring demand;” and

WHEREAS, The United States Conference of Mayors is committed to promoting safe and healthy cities, upholding the rule of law, and over the years has taken strong positions against human trafficking and in support of efforts to combat it, and many mayors have worked hard in their communities to reduce commercial sexual exploitation,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors hereby respectfully urges Congress to swiftly pass the bipartisan Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act (S. 1738/H.R. 3530); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors is prepared to work with the Administration and Congress to combat commercial sexual exploitation of our children and vulnerable adults, and mitigate the associated public safety, economic, and health risks to our nation's cities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors urges the Administration to incorporate demand reduction as a primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention strategy in the Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Trafficking; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all anti-trafficking strategies are survivor-informed and are comprehensive, holding sex buyers and pimps accountable, while providing exit strategies and options for prostituted individuals; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors urges that training and resources be available to local governments and the criminal justice system to stop and deter sex buyers through arrest and prosecution, fines, fees, and penalty assessments that match the severity of the crime, and programs to change sex buyers' behavior long-term (such as so-called "john schools") through federal and state law and city ordinances; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors encourages research projects evaluating the effectiveness of demand-related programs and activities, and that furthers greater understanding of the extent of the commercial sex industry; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors urges the development and implementation of age-appropriate prevention and education programs about the risks and harms of the commercial sex industry and anti-demand messaging to be incorporated into middle school and high-school curricula, in faith-based organizations, youth programs, and healthy masculinities programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the members of The United States Conference of Mayors hold themselves and their employees to the highest ethical standards and promote a shift in the culture of tolerance toward purchasing a human being for sex.