



**JIM DESMOND**  
SUPERVISOR, FIFTH DISTRICT  
SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

**AGENDA ITEM**

**DATE:** April 22, 2025

**11**

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**SUBJECT:**

**SUPPORT FOR ASSEMBLY BILL 379: SURVIVOR SUPPORT AND DEMAND  
REDUCTION ACT (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

**OVERVIEW**

In 2022, Senate Bill 357 decriminalized loitering for the purpose of engaging in prostitution. The effect of this decriminalization has left communities, law enforcement, and vulnerable youth—particularly 16- and 17-year-old victims of trafficking—without critical protections. Despite being legally defined as minors, the lack of clear statutory language left uncertainty over whether these individuals could be treated as victims of trafficking under the law.

In response, Assembly Bill 379 (AB 379), authored by Assemblymember Maggie Krell, would ensure that those who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation are treated with dignity and care while reaffirming law enforcement's ability to investigate, deter, and penalize those who fuel demand for exploitation. AB 379 explicitly reaffirms that any individual under the age of 18—including 16- and 17-year-olds—who is engaged in commercial sex is a victim, not a criminal. It mandates that these minors be referred to diversion programs and offered appropriate support, rather than being processed through the criminal justice system. This change resolves the confusion created by SB 357 and restores the ability of law enforcement and service providers to assist exploited youth.

AB 379 also strengthens enforcement against those who perpetuate the demand for commercial sex. It increases penalties for individuals who knowingly solicit or engage in sex with minors and establishes a new misdemeanor offense for loitering with intent to purchase sex.

The bill also creates the Survivor Support Fund, directing State revenue from offender fines to community-based organizations that serve trafficking survivors. These funds will expand outreach, trauma-informed services, and recovery programs.

Today's action recommends the Board of Supervisors adopt a position of support for AB 379 which would restore necessary legal tools, reinforce protections for minors, and strengthen the state's response to commercial sexual exploitation.

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**RECOMMENDATION**

**SUPERVISOR JIM DESMOND**

Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to express the County's support for Assembly Bill 379, consistent with Board Policy M-2.

**EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

Assembly Bill 379 advances equitable access to protection and support for minors involved in commercial sexual exploitation by ensuring consistent treatment of all individuals under 18 as victims, including 16- and 17-year-olds. AB 379 supports a system that prioritizes safety, recovery, and long-term stability for individuals disproportionately affected by trafficking and exploitation. AB 379 has the support of District Attorney Summer Stephan. AB 379 has also garnered significant community support, including the People's Association of Justice Advocates.

**SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

Assembly Bill 379 advances the County's sustainability goals by improving public health, safety, and social well-being. It diverts minors from the justice system into care, supporting better long-term outcomes. The Survivor Support Fund promotes economic and social sustainability by funding survivor-led organizations that provide trauma-informed services and strengthen community resilience.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact associated with this recommendation. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

**BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

N/A

**ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT**

N/A

**BACKGROUND**

In 2022, Senate Bill 357 decriminalized loitering for the purpose of engaging, directing, supervising, recruiting, or aiding a person who is loitering with the intent to commit prostitution. This emboldened criminal enterprises. The effect of this decriminalization has been detrimental to communities, law enforcement, and vulnerable youth.

In an effort to combat the sexual exploitation of minors, State Senator Shannon Grove introduced a series of bills over the last few years aimed at increasing penalties and protecting victims. In 2023, SB 14 was passed, classifying the human trafficking of a minor as a serious felony. This bill specifically targeted the criminals who run prostitution rings. In 2024, SB 1414 was passed, which increased penalties for soliciting sex from a minor and required offenders to register as sex offenders.

However, the bill was amended to only consider 16- and 17-year-olds as minors if they are found to be victims of human trafficking. This amendment left 16- and 17-year-olds without critical

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protections. Despite being legally defined as minors, the lack of clear statutory language left uncertainty over whether these individuals could be treated as victims of trafficking under the law.

This legal gap had significant implications in regions like the County of San Diego, where human trafficking remains a serious and growing concern. According to the San Diego Human Trafficking Task Force, San Diego is considered one of the top 13 areas in the nation for sex trafficking. The region sees an estimated 3,000 to 8,000 trafficking victims annually, with a substantial number of those victims being minors. The average age of entry into sex trafficking in San Diego is between 16 and 17 years old—precisely the age group most affected by the enforcement challenges resulting from SB 357 and SB 1414. Without clear statutory authority, law enforcement has been limited in its ability to intervene in situations where minors are being exploited or coerced into commercial sex.

In order to close the loophole in SB 1414 and reverse the damage caused by SB 357, Assembly Bill 379 (AB 379) was introduced to ensure that those who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation are treated with dignity and care while reaffirming law enforcement's ability to investigate, deter, and penalize those who fuel demand for exploitation. AB 379 explicitly reaffirms that any individual under the age of 18—including 16- and 17-year-olds—who is engaged in commercial sex is a victim, not a criminal. It mandates that these minors be referred to diversion programs and offered appropriate support, rather than being processed through the criminal justice system. This change resolves the confusion created by SB 1414 and restores the ability of law enforcement and service providers to assist exploited youth.

Beyond enforcement tools, AB 379 strengthens penalties for adults who knowingly solicit sex from minors and increases consequences for repeat offenders. It provides statutory clarity to assist in prosecuting those who exploit children or routinely engage in unlawful solicitation. The bill also creates the Survivor Support Fund, directing fine revenue from offenders to community-based, survivor-led organizations that provide trauma-informed services, outreach, and recovery support for trafficking survivors. These organizations are essential in helping victims access the care and resources they need to heal and rebuild their lives.

AB 379 represents a measured, victim-centered approach that restores effective legal tools while prioritizing care and recovery for exploited youth. Supporting this bill aligns with the County of San Diego's efforts to enhance public safety, protect vulnerable populations, and support pathways to long-term stability. Today's action recommends the Board of Supervisors adopt a position of support for AB 379 and its effort to strengthen California's response to commercial sexual exploitation.

**LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN**

Today's proposed action supports the Community Safety and Quality of Life Initiative in the County of San Diego's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan by helping to ensure safe communities that improve the quality of life for all residents.

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Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Desmond", written in a cursive style.

JIM DESMOND  
Supervisor, Fifth District

**ATTACHMENTS**

N/A