

# Rep. Billings: Statement on Sexually Exploited Children Protection Act

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MADISON, Wis. — Today, the Assembly Committee on Children and Families heard legislation aimed at protecting child victims of human trafficking from criminal prosecution. The bill, Assembly Bill 186, is authored by Rep. Jill Billings (D-La Crosse). Rep. Billings released the following statement regarding the bill:

“Children who have been trafficked are victims, but currently our legal system re-victimizes and traumatizes them by treating them as criminals,” Rep. Billings said. “Children cannot legally consent to sex, thus they should not be held legally responsible for acts they were forced to perform. The goal of this bill is to protect these children, while allowing law enforcement to focus on the real criminals: those who buy and sell children for sex.”

Assembly Bill 186 has strong bipartisan support. The legislation is co-authored by Sen. Sheila Harsdorf (R-River Falls) and is supported by Wisconsin Attorney General Brad Schimel.

“Children who are trafficked have often been victims of sexual abuse for a long time, and many continue to struggle with issues like homelessness and substance dependency, making them extremely vulnerable,” Rep. Billings said. “By legally protecting them from prosecution, we will show victims that they are safe to come forward and receive the protective services they need.”

A copy of Rep. Billings’ testimony can be found [here](#). Click [here](#) for a photograph of

Rep. Billings testifying during today's hearing.