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March 11, 2015

RE: Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act (S. 178)

Dear Senator:

The National Right to Life Committee (NRLC), the federation of state right-to-life organizations, urges you to oppose any attempt to amend the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act (S. 178) in order to open the door to federal funding of elective abortion.

For reasons explained below, NRLC has no objection whatever to the committee-reported text of S. 178, which is currently under consideration on the floor of the Senate. The bill creates a new Domestic Trafficking Victims' Fund within the U.S. Treasury, administered by the Attorney General. The Fund will award grants or enhance programming for victims of child human trafficking. This includes child victims of sex trafficking, as well as children trafficked for purposes of forced labor, meaning "the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery."

The Attorney General will award grants from the Fund to state and local governments to assist law enforcement and "qualified victims' services organizations" in collaborating to "rescue and restore the lives of victims," as well as prosecuting perpetrators of trafficking. It is not disputed that the services are defined broadly enough to cover elective abortion for minor girls, including those who are employed in coerced labor, in the absence of language to prevent this. For instance, the bill provides for the delivering of child human trafficking services through coordination with "nongovernmental organizations and shelter service providers with substantial experience in delivering wrap-around services to victims of child human trafficking."

The committee-reported bill raises no concern because it also applies the Hyde Amendment to the new fund, thereby ensuring that the new fund will not pay for abortions, except to save the life of the mother, or in cases of rape or incest. S. 178 does this by directly referencing the Hyde Amendment as it appears in sections 506 and 507 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014, Public Law 113-76 -- a measure that passed the Senate on January 16, 2014 by a vote of 72-26.

It is prudent and necessary for Congress to include such abortion-related language when it creates

a new program that will fund health services – as was done, for example, when Congress created the Children’s Health Program (SCHIP) in 1997.

Even though S. 178 was unanimously approved by the Judiciary Committee, this week the Minority Leader and some others have threatened to obstruct the progress of the bill unless the Hyde provision is removed. If an amendment is actually offered to strike the Hyde provision, we urge you to oppose that amendment, because it would open the door to funding of abortion on demand under the proposed new program.

Under S. 178, the money in the Victims’ Fund would be obtained from dedicated fines imposed on traffickers. In our view, the funding sources are entirely irrelevant – the Fund will be a federal program, dispensing federal funds. The Justice Department and other government agencies receive funds from many sources, but once they are received by the government they become federal funds. If such funds are transmitted to abortionists to pay for abortions, that constitutes *federal funding for abortion*.

Therefore, a vote to remove the Hyde provision from S. 178 would be a vote in favor of direct federal funding of abortion on demand, and would be accurately so described in our scorecard of key right-to-life votes of the 114th Congress. We respectfully urge you to oppose any such amendment to S. 178.

Respectfully submitted,



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Legislative Director



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