

June 21, 2012

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The Honorable Robert S. Mueller, III
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20535

Dear Director Mueller:

I am writing in support of a request under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) from ECPAT-USA for information from the Highway Serial Killings (HSK) Initiative undertaken by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). ECPAT-USA is the U.S. chapter of ECPAT-International, which was founded in 1991 to combat the sex trafficking of children. One of ECPAT-USA's activities is to document the harm that results from sex trafficking in order to raise awareness about this issue and to promote programs, policies, and laws to protect children.

As you know, there is a shortage of accurate and available data on both the incidence and the impact of sex trafficking in the United States. However, as ECPAT-USA has pointed out in its FOIA request to the FBI, the HSK Initiative has data that could help researchers, policymakers, and advocates better understand the problem of domestic trafficking. According to the FBI's own spokesperson, 234 of the 459 murder victims in the HSK Initiative--approximately 50 percent--were identified as "prostitutes".¹ However, each victim under 18 years of age who was given the classification of "prostitute" was, in fact, a minor victim of sex trafficking. Likewise, many of the other victims who were so classified may also have been victims of sex trafficking. In these types of cases, the HSK Initiative provides a unique opportunity to better understand one of the worst outcomes of sex trafficking: murder.

Like you, I am a strong supporter of efforts to combat sex trafficking, serve victims, and hold the pimps and other perpetrators of the crime accountable. I have been deeply troubled by the stories I have heard from victims, service providers, and law enforcement alike who have pointed to the I-5 Corridor--which runs from Mexico to Canada and passes through my home state of Oregon--as a stretch of America where sex trafficking is particularly pervasive. According to a map of the murders in the HSK Initiative, several of these victims have been found in Oregon. Through the utilization of existing data collected by federal, state, and local law enforcement, as ECPAT-

¹ Blake Morrison, "Along highways, signs of serial killings," *USA Today*, accessed June 19, 2012, http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2010-10-05-1Ahighwaykiller05_CV_N.htm

USA's FOIA request seeks to do, we can better understand the trends and practices associated with trafficking in persons and prevent more individuals--especially women and girls--from falling victim to this terrible crime.

I have received a copy of ECPAT-USA's FOIA request and a response letter from the FBI refusing to provide any of the requested information under U.S.C. 552(b)(2), 5 U.S.C. (b)(7)(D), and 5 U.S.C. 552 (b)(7)(E). ECPAT-USA's request clearly states that it does not include a request for any personal identifiers or any information that could compromise law enforcement investigations. It is my firm belief that the Freedom of Information Act requires the FBI to provide ECPAT-USA all information from the HSK Initiative that is non-exempt. While this may require the FBI to redact very specific information, it seems likely the FBI is in possession of relevant information collected as part of the HSK Initiative that can be shared with ECPAT-USA that is not exempt from disclosure. This critical information will assist policymakers, law enforcement, service providers, and advocates in identifying the ways to best support and strengthen existing efforts to eliminate human trafficking in Oregon and throughout the United States.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator

cc: Carol Smolenski, Executive Director, ECPAT-USA
Brian Willis, Health Advisor, ECPAT-USA