

RESOLUTION NO. 1279

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF DES MOINES, WASHINGTON, relating to combating commercial sexual exploitation through comprehensive demand enforcement, deterrence, and prevention and partnering with Police Departments and City Attorney's offices across King County who are shifting their emphasis to pursue sex buyers.

**WHEREAS**, the Des Moines City Council is committed to public safety, health and wellbeing, and economic growth within its city, and

**WHEREAS**, commercial sexual exploitation, which includes sex trafficking, is growing throughout King County, Washington and the United States, thriving in cities across geographic and socio-demographic variability, and significantly threatening the safety and well-being of the children and vulnerable adults being purchased, families of buyers, legitimate businesses, and our communities, and

**WHEREAS**, hundreds of our children - often coming from the foster care system - are at risk of being commercially sexually exploited each year, with eleven to fourteen 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 state and federal definitions of being "trafficked" and wanting to leave if they felt they had alternative choices for survival or did not fear retribution by pimps, and

**WHEREAS**, criminal syndicate, gang, and drug dealer involvement in prostitution within and among cities is increasing nationwide, and

**WHEREAS**, sex buyers drive the entire illegal sex industry, with so-called "johns" operating on the Internet constituting an estimated 3.5% of the adult male population in King County, which translates to over 27,000 men soliciting sex online; with the majority having partners and "high-frequency sex buyers" earning an average \$120,000 per year, and

**WHEREAS**, it is illegal to purchase sex in the City of Des Moines, King County, and the State of Washington, yet prostituted individuals are arrested and prosecuted up to ten times more frequently than buyers of sex, 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**, eighty percent (80%) of purchased sex is brokered online, with thousands of new ads posted each week in the escort services sections of websites such as *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 Des Moines City Council is committed to promoting a safe and healthy community, upholding the rule of law and have taken a strong position against human trafficking and in support of efforts to combat it, and have worked hard in its community to reduce commercial sexual exploitation; now therefore,

**THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF DES MOINES RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:**

**Sec. 1.** The City of Des Moines is prepared to collaborate with King County and the cities of Seattle, Kent, Federal Way, Bellevue, and Renton to combat commercial sexual exploitation of our children and vulnerable adults, and mitigate the associated public safety, economic, and health risks to our City.

**Sec. 2.** The City of Des Moines will incorporate demand reduction as a primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention strategy in its jurisdictions.

**Sec. 3.** The City of Des Moines supports the partnership of the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office and the Organization for Prostitution Survivors and the "Buyers Beware" initiative to reduce the demand for commercial sex by twenty percent (20%) in the next two years.

**Sec. 4.** 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.

**Sec. 5.** The City of Des Moines urges that training and resources be available to local governments and the criminal

justice system to stop and deter sex buyers through arrest, prosecution, fines, and penalties that match the severity of the crime, and programs to change sex buyers' behavior long-term (such as buyer intervention programs) through state law and city ordinances.

**Sec. 6.** The City of Des Moines encourages research projects evaluating the effectiveness of demand-related programs and activities, and that further greater understanding of the extent of the commercial sex industry.

**Sec. 7.** The City of Des Moines 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, health masculinities programs.

**Sec. 8.** The City of Des Moines holds itself and its employees to the highest ethical standards and promotes a shift away from the culture of tolerance toward purchasing a human being for sex.

**ADOPTED BY** the City Council of the City of Des Moines, Washington this 23rd day of October, 2014 and signed in authentication thereof this 23rd day of October, 2014.

  
M A Y O R

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

  
Assistant City Attorney

ATTEST:

  
City Clerk