

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT
(S3175 Volker /A5258 Scarborough)

*An ACT to amend the social services law and the family court act,
in relation to services for exploited children.*

This bill offers a positive response to approximately 5,000 young people in our state who are caught in a difficult web of dangerous sexual conduct and provides them safe passage out. Instead of offering jail time, court appearances, probation, or other actions as punishment, this bill asks that communities offer them love, emotional support, services, health care and a chance for a future. Instead of treating these young people as criminals, this bill treats them as our community's children, children who are deserving of a community's embrace and guidance.

These children, some as young as eleven years old, are victims. They are not only victims of the sex trade but may have also been victimized by sexual abuse in their early childhood. Many come from dysfunctional families. Some may have simply made bad decisions at a young age, decisions with terrible consequences. They are a subset of the estimated 87,000 16 to 19 year olds defined as "disconnected" youth in New York State. For them, the door to a bright future has been slammed shut.

Yes, these young people can be difficult to reach. The multiple services that cross agency jurisdictions that they need will be expensive. They will need professional support – mental health professionals, social workers, and teachers with an expertise working with children who have been sexually exploited who can help them gain the self esteem needed to set goals for their future. They need structure and the means to achieve those goals. This bill provides them that opportunity.

To ignore their needs will also be very expensive.

Therefore, SCAA urges the passage of S3175/A5258.

Karen Schimke
President & CEO

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