



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Maya Paley
Director of Legislative & Community Engagement
maya@ncjwla.org
323-852-8536 (office)
818-571-3933 (mobile)

Governor Brown Signs AB 1761 Creating Affirmative Defense for Human Trafficking Victims in California

Los Angeles, CA- The National Council of Jewish Women-CA (NCJW-CA) and the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST) are pleased to announce that Governor Brown signed AB 1761 (Weber) on Monday, September 26, 2016. Both NCJW-CA and CAST sponsored this critical legislation that will create a new affirmative defense for human trafficking victims and survivors in California.

California is now the 35th state to pass legislation creating an affirmative defense specifically for human trafficking. However California's law offers far broader protections to victims than most prior legislation as it covers all non-violent, non-serious offenses. This new law will allow human trafficking victims and survivors to have charges against them dismissed if they can show that they only committed the offense as a direct result of their trafficking experience.

"By providing an affirmative defense for survivors of human trafficking for all non-violent, non-serious offenses, this landmark legislation protects victims of trafficking from being convicted of crimes their traffickers forced them to commit and helps bring forward information about their traffickers. It also prevents future harm to victims that stems from having a criminal record which can create barriers to securing employment and housing," said CAST Policy and Legal Services Director, Stephanie Richard.

"We are excited that Governor Brown signed AB 1761," said Maya Paley, Director of Legislative and Community Engagement of NCJW|LA. "This new legislation is critically important for human trafficking victims and survivors who are often charged and convicted of crimes their traffickers forced or coerced them to commit. An affirmative defense will help victims avoid being criminalized for crimes they were not responsible for committing from the start, allowing them to focus on restarting their lives rather than face the long-term and negative consequences of being put through the criminal justice system."

CAST and NCJW|LA are both pleased that SB 823 (Block) and SB 1322 (Mitchell) were also signed by Governor Brown on September 26, 2016. SB 823 will help many more human trafficking victims and survivors vacate their criminal records for crimes they were forced or coerced to commit while they were trafficked. This is another critical step forward for human trafficking victims and survivors who face multiple obstacles to

restarting their lives once they have freed themselves from their traffickers. With conviction records, it is extremely difficult for survivors to find jobs and housing. SB 1322 ensures that minor victim of trafficking cannot be arrested for prostitution or solicitation and are referred to services instead.

This year NCJW-CA and CAST sponsored two additional provisions that took a broader approach than SB 823 and SB 1322-AB 1762 (Vacating Convictions) (Campos) and AB 1760 (Human Trafficking) (Santiago). We hope that in the future California will adopt additional measures found in AB 1762 and 1760 not provided in SB 1322 or SB 823 to further enhance protections for trafficking victims. Governor Brown vetoed AB 1762 and AB 1760 died in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

For media inquiries or to learn more, call Maya Paley at 323-852-8536, 818-571-3933 (c) or email maya@ncjwla.org.

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ABOUT NCJW|LA

The National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) is a grassroots organization of volunteers and advocates committed to the welfare and well-being of the Los Angeles Community. Inspired by Jewish values, NCJW strives for social justice by improving the quality of life for women, children, and families and by safeguarding individual rights and freedoms. NCJW|LA serves more than 12,000 individuals through our Community Mental Health and Supportive Services, Scholarships, Talkline, Youth Educational Programs and Services, Back 2 School Store, intern training programs and our clothing assistance projects. NCJW|LA social justice programs provide education and legislative advocacy on issues that affect and impact women, children and families in the areas of children's rights, economic justice, healthcare, human trafficking, reproductive justice, LGBTQ rights, and gender related violence. All donations to our 8 Council Thrift Shops support the programs and services of NCJW|LA. NCJW|LA is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization (Tax ID #95-1641433). Donate Today to Council Thrift (800)400-6259. To Get Help Call 877-655-3807 or for more info visit www.ncjwla.org, call 323-651-2930, or email info@ncjwla.org. **Donate Today to Council Thrift (800)400-6259. To Get Help Call 877-655-3807** or for more info visit www.ncjwla.org, call 323-651-2930, or email info@ncjwla.org.

About CAST

CAST is the largest non-profit organization in the United States providing direct legal and social services exclusively to survivors of human trafficking. A Los Angeles-based organization, CAST provides trafficking survivors with a continuum of life-transforming services, including a 24-hour emergency hotline (888-539-2373), food, shelter, counselling, medical care, legal assistance and leadership training. Through CAST, survivors find the safety and support they need to recover their dignity and rebuild their lives. In April 2014, CAST's work was honored by President Obama with the [*Presidential Award for Extraordinary Efforts to Combat Trafficking in Persons*](#). Learn more at www.castla.org or follow CAST on Twitter ([@CASTLA](#)) and [Facebook](#).