

July 28, 2015



DALLAS
WOMEN'S
FOUNDATION

The Honorable Michael Rawlings
Mayor
City of Dallas
1500 Marilla Street, Room 5EN
Dallas, Texas 75201-6390

Dear Mayor Rawlings,

Thank you for your strong and capable leadership of the City of Dallas. As board and staff members of Dallas Women's Foundation—the largest regional women's fund in the world—we especially appreciate your and the City's strong stance on eliminating degrading acts of violence against women and girls.

We are writing today to express our deep concern and disgust that the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center, which is City property, will host the 'EXXXOTICA Expo' in August.

As you emphasized at the #StopSlaveryDallas symposium in April, **human trafficking in our City must stop.** Ending human trafficking is, as you said, "the next logical step in my campaign against domestic violence." You have been and continue to be a great advocate for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking. That is why we are deeply troubled by the fact that the 'EXXXOTICA Expo' is being hosted here in Dallas – not to mention that it is in the facility named to honor one of Dallas Women's Foundation's founders and a fierce and formidable advocate for the rights of women and girls.

The 'EXXXOTICA Expo' is sponsored by several online escort services, and will feature numerous enterprises that contribute to the sex trade industry. In this region alone, sex trade is estimated to generate \$99 million annually. For us, that figure translates into human tragedies - women and girls, as well as boys, living the harsh reality of commercial sexual exploitation.

While it is too late for the City to cancel the 'EXXOTICA Expo' here in August, **we urge you, the City, the Convention & Visitors Bureau and all those associated with convention recruiting not to solicit this event again, nor others like it.** We do not want our City providing a cover of respectability for conventions that glorify and further the exploitation of and violence against women and girls.

In January 2011, Dallas Women's Foundation published the study, **Adolescent Girls in Texas Sex Trade**, which described the extent of commercial sexual exploitation of girls in the state. The findings were grim, indeed. The study reported that **740 girls were being trafficked in one month statewide, and of those, 256 were in Dallas/Fort Worth.** The Dallas/Fort Worth metropolitan area accounted for 35% of the state's internet and escort service activity

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involving the commercial sexual exploitation of girls, despite accounting for only 26% of the state's total population. Today, Texas ranks second in the nation for the number of calls to the National Human Trafficking Hotline.

We are working hard to end domestic human trafficking in North Texas. We have invested in programs and organizations committed to ending human trafficking and helping those victimized by the sex trade – organizations such as the Letot Girls Residential Center, New Friends New Life, Mosaic Family Services and Human Rights Initiative. We encourage you to join us in saying, "Not our women. Not our children. Not our city."

Sincerely,

Ellenore K. Baker
Chair, Board of Directors

Roslyn Dawson Thompson
President & CEO

- cc: North Texas Coalition Against Human Trafficking
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