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**TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO 21-H 5270, AN ACT RELATING TO
BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS – HOTELS -- HUMAN TRAFFICKING
REPORTING AND PREVENTION ACT
February 8, 2021**

This bill would require hotels to educate their employees about identifying, reporting and preventing human trafficking on their premises. This would occur by means of signage, training and other means. We certainly do not question the goal of educating hotel employees about this issue. However, to the extent that this bill purports to make hotel staff experts on human trafficking and obligates them to report “suspicious” activities, we believe it goes too far.

For good or for bad, it is all too easy for some activity that takes place in hotels to be misinterpreted. It has become abundantly clear that police officers themselves – supposedly the people who would be most trained to know the signs of human trafficking – are all too quick to wrongly allege trafficking. When one considers the highly publicized arrest of Patriots owner Bob Kraft in what was supposedly a trafficking operation that resulted in no trafficking charges, or arrests that have occurred in Rhode Island where there have been similar initial allegations of trafficking that have not been supported by the evidence, the dangers of “deputizing” hotel employees in this fashion are clear. The State should not be mandating their participation and thus directly encouraging them in making similar types of mistakes.

For these reasons, the ACLU of Rhode Island opposes this legislation as drafted.

Submitted by: Steven Brown, Executive Director