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## **SUMMARY: LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING ALONG WITH VICTIM & WITNESS RESOURCES**

Human trafficking continues to be a problem across the country, and last year the legislature took steps to remedy the situation by increasing the felony level for each of the separate offenses. This bill ensures victims get the services they need, perpetrators receive the punishment they deserve, and the underprivileged in our community have access to resources during criminal proceedings. It accomplishes the following:

- Establishes that individuals convicted of the lesser “B” felony offenses would be required to serve a mandatory minimum 1/2 to 7/10 of their sentence and not have the opportunity to be paroled within a short period of time.
- Gives county prosecutors additional plea bargaining tools in their efforts across the state.
- Provides victims of human trafficking access to a counselor who can be with them during any proceedings related to the offense in support of that victim. Counselors play an important role in criminal proceedings and the recovery of victims.
- Allows prosecuting witnesses who have a mental disability to have their interests represented at criminal proceedings by court-appointed counsel, called a guardian ad litem.

Those who commit human trafficking don’t deserve the right to be paroled within a short period of time, and victims of trafficking should be ensured a counselor is by their side during the difficult parts of the criminal justice process. Without the support of a counselor or a guardian ad litem, the criminal justice system can be incredibly difficult to navigate and has resulted in numerous cases resulting in an acquittal due to the capabilities of the prosecuting witnesses. These new provisions will provide victims and witnesses with the resources they need.