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PRESS RELEASE

Utah Legislature Approves Child Exploitation Bill

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH: The Utah House of Representatives late yesterday voted unanimously to approve Senate Bill 167, sponsored by Senator Chris Wilson (R-Logan) and co-sponsored by Representative Karianne Lisonbee (R-Clearfield). SB 167 Sexual Exploitation Amendments was drafted to toughen penalties against those who exploit children by producing and distributing child pornography. The bill makes those crimes a first degree felony and was introduced due to offenders being prosecuted and convicted but only receiving very light sentences.

"I want to thank Malouf and the Malouf Foundation for their role in making this happen. This whole discussion began when Malouf brought in an expert from Oklahoma to talk to our law enforcement agencies about successes Oklahoma has had with prosecuting predators. We identified in that meeting that we needed to toughen our laws," said Cache County Executive David Zook. "I would also like to thank Senator Wilson for running this bill. It took him no more than 2 seconds to agree to run this bill when I asked him to sponsor it. And then he made it his number-1 priority!"

In addition to increasing penalties for exploitation, the bill also directs the state's sentencing commission to study penalties associated with child sexual exploitation and give recommendations for additional improvements to be made next legislative session.

"A huge thanks also needs to go to our County Attorney John Luthy and his prosecutors Jacob Gordon and Dane Murray who drafted the bill, advised us and testified in support with heart-wrenching examples," added Mr. Zook. "In addition to our local prosecutors, staff from Utah Attorney General Sean Reye's office were also instrumental in making this happen.

"The horrors of child exploitation are things my office deals with every day, and I applaud this bill to help fight these horrendous crimes with stronger laws," said Attorney General Sean D. Reyes. "The reality is that child pornography, exploitation and abuse are getting worse every year, and COVID has only intensified the threat. SB 167 will provide a valuable legal tool to hold perpetrators more accountable. I thank Senator Chris Wilson and Representative Karianne Lisonbee for taking the lead on this legislation."

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