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NATIONAL INITIATIVE TO FIGHT SEX TRAFFICKING LAUNCHED

*Countdown to Reduce Demand for Paid Sex by 20 Percent in Two Years Kicks Off in
11 Cities*

CAMBRIDGE, MA, February 4, 2015 – Eleven pioneering cities today announced the launch of the CEASE Network (Cities Empowered Against Sexual Exploitation), a collaboration of men and women committed to combatting sex trafficking by reducing demand for buying sex by 20 percent in two years.

Unveiled at a Phoenix, AZ, gathering of national anti-trafficking leaders, the launch marks the beginning of a two-year countdown to reduce demand for paid sex in many major metropolitan areas, including Atlanta, Boston, Chicago (Cook County, IL), Dallas (North Texas), Denver, Houston, Oakland (Alameda County, CA), Phoenix, Portland (Multnomah County, OR), San Diego, and Seattle (King County, WA).

Demand Abolition, a non-profit based in Cambridge, MA, is catalyzing this new initiative to forge a network of cities that are independently developing their own strategies and tactics to reduce sex-buying. The program's ultimate goal is to fuel a movement in hundreds of cities across the U.S. that targets sex buyers as an effective means of ending commercial sexual exploitation.

“Human beings –particularly women and children—are being bought for sex in every corner of our country and the majority are there by force, either at the hands of abusive pimps and traffickers, or because they lack other options,” said Lina Nealon, Founding Director of Demand Abolition. “The CEASE Network is an action-oriented network testing innovative approaches to reduce demand: No buyers equals no business.”

The network members will collect and analyze data on the illegal sex market, and monitor sex-

buying using offline and online channels. That analysis will inform the design and implementation of tactics tailored to the individual needs of each community. CEASE Network members will share findings, successes, and challenges with other cities for rapid learning across the country. Many of the 11 pilot teams have already begun executing strategies for reducing demand.

In Phoenix, survivors of sexual exploitation, CEASE Network coordinators, police and prosecutors, policymakers, researchers, and philanthropists from across the country gathered this week for five days of planning and workshops. At an opening dinner, Ambassador Swanee Hunt, Founder and Chair of Demand Abolition, joined former Congresswoman Linda Smith, founder and chair of Shared Hope International, in formally launching the two-year reduction countdown.

“Sex-buying is not a victimless crime. It deprives vulnerable people of their basic human rights, damages sex buyers and their families, and hurts the community at large by fueling an illegal industry,” Ambassador Hunt said. “Just as we did with domestic violence, we can change social norms to hold perpetrators accountable and provide options to those who want to escape – which in the case of prostitution is the vast majority.”

The gathering in Phoenix followed the ninth “National Day of Johns Arrests,” which culminated with hundreds of arrests of sex buyers during Super Bowl week. The nationwide sting operation brought together 37 agencies throughout 17 states in a widespread crackdown on the demand for paid sex, and led to the arrests of 570 attempted sex buyers and 23 traffickers.

“We’re facilitating a strategic shift in how law enforcement addresses prostitution,” said Sheriff Thomas J. Dart of Cook County Illinois, who conceived National Day of Johns Arrests in 2011, and whose office has been coordinating it ever since. “The victims need treatment rather than punishment, and sex buyers should be held responsible for their roles in perpetrating the sex trafficking industry.”

Lifelong humanitarian Cindy McCain addressed the launch by video, saying, “I am pleased to be a part of Demand Abolition’s effort to reduce demand for commercial sex in Arizona. We have worked hard on increased penalties for traffickers and increased protection and added services for victims. As a community, it is time that we work together to hold buyers accountable and give a voice to the voiceless.”

About Demand Abolition

Demand Abolition is committed to eradicating illegal commercial sex in the United States by focusing on those who fuel the sex trade—the buyers. Working with a vast network of survivors, criminal justice professionals, nongovernment organizations, researchers and data specialists, philanthropists, corporate leaders, policymakers, and activists, Demand Abolition is catalyzing a cultural shift to one that holds sex buyers accountable for their actions, and vulnerable adults and children are given opportunities beyond paid sexual exploitation. For more information, visit: demandabolition.org.

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