



# Assemblywoman Blanca Rubio & Catharine Baker

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## AB 2124: Human Trafficking: Funding Vertical Prosecution

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### **What is the background of this proposal?**

Human trafficking is a form of modern day slavery, one that involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to recruit, harbor, transport, provide, or obtain a person for the purposes of labor or sexual exploitation. Approximately 14,000 to 17,000 victims are trafficked into the United States annually. Between 2010 and 2012, California's nine regional human trafficking task forces identified 1,277 victims, initiated 2,552 investigations, arrested 1,798 individuals, and provided critical training to more than 25,000 law enforcement, personnel, prosecutors, victim service providers, and first responders.

Vertical prosecution teams are the most effective in prosecuting human trafficking. Vertical prosecution units generally involve one or more staff attorneys who handle a specific type of case, here, human trafficking, from arraignment to conviction, rather than different attorneys handling different stages of prosecution. This means district attorneys (DA's) are able to specialize in the uniquely challenging features of prosecuting human trafficking. It also means the victim, who is already facing a difficult and emotional process, does not have to develop a new relationship with a new prosecutor at each stage of the case. Vertical prosecution units also work closely with law enforcement during investigations. This is a method that is often employed in human trafficking cases because it allows the prosecution team to give valuable feedback on the key evidence that law enforcement should seek to collect, and facilitates the victims' sustained participation in cases that are otherwise already difficult to prosecute.

### **What is the problem to be addressed?**

Increasing funding to supplement current vertical prosecution programs in California will provide valuable resources to these programs and help further efforts to prosecute and convict human traffickers. Providing this support to vertical prosecution is one of the single most effective ways to get perpetrators behind bars for the crime of human trafficking.

### **What does this bill do?**

Contingent upon funding, this bill would require OES to award funds to up to 11 DA offices that employ vertical prosecution programs for the prosecution of human trafficking crimes. OES would be required to provide a report to the Legislature outlining the number of prosecutions for human trafficking cases, the number of convictions, and sentences imposed.

In order to receive an award of grant funds, a prosecuting office must have specified staffing dedicated for human trafficking vertical prosecution, provide annual data on the number of cases filed by the county and their outcomes, and have a memorandum of understanding with an advocacy agency that provides counseling and/or services to victims.

These funds shall be appropriated on a competitive basis to DA's that meet the established criteria. Additionally, no more than 9.5% of the appropriated funds shall be used for administrative costs, including technical assistance, training, and the cost of producing required reports. This measure shall sunset in January 1, 2023.

### **Who is the staff contact for this bill?**

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