

**Statement by  
Tom S., Father of a Child Sex Trafficking Victim on Backpage.com**

**Backpage.com's Knowing Facilitation of Online Sex Trafficking  
January 10, 2017**

**Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations  
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee  
United States Senate**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and esteemed members of the Subcommittee.

I am a husband, father, and grandfather. I am a simple man, raising his family. I now find myself in this fight, mainly in support of my wife and daughter. Until today I have been in the background, but I am here today because I do not see any future prospect of living a life where we do not have to mention this ordeal we've been living at least once a day.

I can tell you that I was very intimidated and awestruck thinking about what to say here today to our American leadership. How can I tell you anything? Describe anything in a way that could make a change? I'm humbled at the idea. I have watched my wife with respect and pride, just trucking along in this incomprehensible battle against long odds. A true David and Goliath fight. I'm not as optimistic and hopeful as she is, and let me tell you why.

During this six-year nightmare, two things have struck me: First, that somehow children have become a bargaining chip. They've become bystanders in the outcome of a fight that's been labeled as being about internet freedom and they are just collateral damage in the huge industry of modern convenience that we all enjoy online. I can't bring myself to accept that these kids are just the cost of doing business in today's world.

Second, I've been disgusted and shocked by the commitment and stance that Backpage.com has taken. That Backpage somehow thinks it has the right to sell my child, and that the First Amendment gives them that right to do so and there's nothing anyone can do about it. And this isn't just their business opinion – they're shouting this argument from every court in the country. I can't believe the contempt and lack of humanity they've taken. Not only do they admit to selling kids and human beings, they have doubled down to protect their right to do so. They are *committed* to selling people on the Internet. How can it be that we are even debating this here today?

Backpage hides behind the Communications Decency Act (CDA), and they collect their money, all the while pretending to support the lofty, high-minded principals of the First Amendment. Even more amazing is that they usually win.

In my mind, it's simple – what happened to my daughter on Backpage.com is criminal. What happens to every child sold for sex on Backpage.com is criminal. Children are not acceptable collateral damage. They are our hope and our future, America's conscience.

Now that I know you've heard our story, I know you can do something to prevent any more children from paying this price.