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September 8, 2017

California Department of Social Services
Community Care Licensing

Re: Application for a License for Children of the Immaculate Heart and The Refuge

Dear California Department of Social Services:

On behalf of the San Diego County District Attorney's Office, I write to provide information to support Children of the Immaculate Heart and The Refuge in their application to obtain licensing from the California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing. A copy of their program statement has been received and reviewed.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has identified San Diego as one of 13 U.S. cities designated as a high intensity child prostitution area. A validated study about the scope of Sex Trafficking in San Diego County published by the National Institute of Justice in 2016 verified critical facts that we had been experiencing in law enforcement, prosecution and victim advocacy: Sex Trafficking in San Diego County is the second largest criminal industry in our region at \$810 million dollars annually, the estimate of victims is at an average of 5,000 victims annually, the average age of entry into sex trafficking is 16 years old and gangs are involved in 85percent of the sex trafficking activity. The study also identified a big gap in services for victims with about 33 residential beds available for victims and none specifically designated for minor victims of sex trafficking.

In 2015, we formed the San Diego County Human Trafficking Task Force lead by the California Department of Justice and that includes the District Attorney's Office and Deputy District Attorneys, DA Investigators and DA Victim Advocates as part of the Task Force. All members of the DA team have repeatedly experienced the challenges of providing an appropriate therapeutic safe home setting for minor victims. Despite all efforts, it is often not appropriate to return the minor to their home environment right away either because the home is part of the exploitation issue or because the level of trauma experienced by the minor is not suitable for placement in their original home.

In order to fill this important gap in services, Children of the Immaculate Heart and The Refuge have developed a short-term residential therapeutic program for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children. They plan to incorporate a home like setting into a therapeutic milieu to break the trauma bonds and help the victims recover from the atrocities they have endured in their exploitation. Their treatment team will create an individual treatment plan to meet the residential, therapeutic and educational needs of the child. Additionally, they are partnering with research committees to study their program for its effectiveness to share with other programs throughout the country.

Support Letter from DA Stephan

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Children of the Immaculate Heart is a strong partner with the San Diego County District Attorney's Office, proactively working towards ending human trafficking in San Diego County. They have been a constant presence in the fight against human trafficking by providing residential services to adult victims, serving on the Victim Services Committee of the San Diego County Board of Supervisor's Regional Human Trafficking/ CSEC Advisory Council and working collaboratively with community partners.

We highly support Children of the Immaculate Heart and The Refuge application and are fully committed to assisting in any way that would benefit its implementation.

Sincerely,



SUMMER STEPHAN

District Attorney, San Diego County