

# [***'Assaulted All Over Again': GOP State Lawmaker Bashes Dems For Making It Easier To Get Away With Trafficking Minors***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BVF-T3Y1-DXXD-70KV-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

[*Link to Image*](https://cdn01.dailycaller.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Trafficking-scaled-e1660679993668.jpg)

Republican state Sen. Shannon Grove of California blasted her Democratic colleagues for weakening a bill that would make buying a child for sex a felony offense.

The [*bill*](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240SB1414), which Grove introduced in February, would have made soliciting a minor for sex a felony charge with the potential for up to four years of prison time, a fine of up to $25,000 and required those convicted to register as sex offenders. Democratic lawmakers on the Senate Public Safety Committee [*passed*](https://dailycaller.com/2024/04/17/california-democrats-scale-back-bill-intended-strengthen-laws-against-purchasing-child-sex/) amendments to the bill Wednesday, without Grove's approval, that dropped chances of [*prison*](https://www.cbsnews.com/sacramento/news/california-bill-to-make-purchasing-child-sex-felony-amended-weakens-certain-penalties/#:~:text=The%20original%20bill%2C%20authored%20by,registry%20required%20on%20repeat%20offenses.) time to a max of one year in jail and reduced the charges to a misdemeanor if the child was 16 or 17. [***(RELATED: Florida Man Charged In New York With Trafficking Multiple Women For Sex And Targeting A Minor)***](https://dailycaller.com/2024/04/18/joel-david-forney-kissimmee-florida-charged-sex-trafficking-multiple-women-sexually-assaulting-minor-new-york-department-of-justice/)

“When I was standing at that podium I was shocked at what was happening, and I said, 'Are you forcing these amendments on me?' And the chair said, 'Yes.' And the audience, with all of our survivors in the background, gasped,” Grove told the Daily Caller News Foundation. “Some of them cried out. They're mortified. They are hurt. They feel like they've been assaulted all over again by what happened.”

The amendments also made it so that a person could face charges or [*pay*](https://sjvsun.com/news/politics/calif-lawmakers-say-buying-16-17-year-olds-for-sex-isnt-a-felony/) a $10,000 fine and “buy their way out of a crime” if the victim was under 16 years old, Grove told the DCNF.

“I've thought through this process and I thought through any rational reason that they could have, but I think somebody just needs to ask them why they don't want to put people in prison for buying children,” Grove said. “My mind cannot wrap around a rational reason not to do that.”

Today, the Senate Public Safety Committee refused to pass my bill to send child sex buyers to prison.

Instead of making the buying of kids a felony with prison time, the committee forced me to take amendments I didn't agree with and watered down my bill to allow a fine or...

- Senator Shannon Grove (@ShannonGroveCA) [*April 16, 2024*](https://twitter.com/ShannonGroveCA/status/1780349464164675684?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw)

California is the fifth highest state in the nation for human trafficking, with 3.43 cases per every 100,000, [*according*](https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/human-trafficking-statistics-by-state) to the World Population Review.  Sex trafficking accounted for 89% of all human trafficking cases in California in 2021, [*according*](https://www.ppic.org/blog/human-trafficking-in-california/#:~:text=Nearly%20nine%20in%20ten%20reported,85%25%20to%2088%25%20nationally.) to the Public Policy Institute of California.

California lawmakers, however, have pushed legislation that weakens protections for minors who have been sexually abused. In 2020, Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsome [*signed*](https://dailycaller.com/2022/01/21/california-bill-kids-vaccinated-parental-consent-scott-wiener/) a bill [*authored*](https://dailycaller.com/2020/09/01/california-legislature-sex-offender-registry/) by Democratic state Sen. Scott Wiener, who is on the committee and [*voted*](https://sjvsun.com/news/politics/calif-lawmakers-say-buying-16-17-year-olds-for-sex-isnt-a-felony/) in favor of the amendments to Grove's bill, that relaxed sex offender registry requirements for offenders who were not more than 10 years older than their minor victims.

A similar amendment was put into Grove's bill, removing the requirement to register as a sex offender for buying or engaging in sexual behavior with a minor 15 years old and under if the perpetrator is less than 10 years older than the victim, [*according*](https://sr12.senate.ca.gov/content/sen-groves-measure-make-purchasing-child-sex-felony-rejected-senate-public-safety-committee) to a press release from Grove's office. Grove told the DCNF that the change was “bizarre, convoluted and confusing ... but purposeful.”

“I think every Californian, well just about every Californian, believes that buying sex from a child should be a felony,” Grove said. “And I don't think that these senators wanted to take that vote or face the public backlash, so they watered it down hoping that I would pull the bill entirely.”

Wiener's office did not respond to the DCNF's request for comment.

Democratic state Sen. Craig Bradford also [*voted*](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billVotesClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240SB1414) in support of the amendments, according to the legislature's website. He noted during Wednesday's [*hearing*](https://www.senate.ca.gov/media-archive?time%5Bmedia-element-17484%5D=8704.012876) that while he was supportive of measures to prevent human trafficking, he “generally” hesitated on “creating new felonies” due to their potential “consequences on communities of color.”

Bradford [*supported*](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billVotesClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240SB14) a previous [*bill*](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240SB14) proposed by Grove making the selling of a minor for sex a felony, however said at the hearing that he was concerned with the new bill because the offender might not have known the age of the minor at the time of the crime. Grove worked with the committee by proposing an amendment to make the sex offender registry requirement for repeat offenders only, but told the DCNF that the senators did not accept her revisions.

Bradford's office referred the DCNF to his Wednesday testimony.

“We negotiated a second chance for offenders before you get on a registry because there were things brought to us such as if they met somebody in a bar or they're drinking, you would think that they were old enough to be there but come to find out the person was only 16,” Grove said. “You don't want to destroy anybody's life, but if you're a repeat offender, I want you in prison for a long time away from our children. We negotiated in good faith, but the whole time, they were negotiating in bad faith, and I can tell you that someone told me that in 21 years they have never seen that happen.”

The bill must now make its way through the Appropriations Committee before going to the state Senate, and Grove told the DCNF that her team is working to strengthen the bill. Grove argued this setback was extremely disheartening for victims of sex trafficking and would only embolden sex traffickers.

“These amendments say, 'buyers, you have free reign,” Grove said. “Any perpetrator that enjoys engaging in sexual activity with a child is going to just continue to do it because it's going to still be just a slap on the wrist.”

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**Graphic**

NEW YORK, NY - NOVEMBER 29: People gather to protest human trafficking at the Thurgood Marshall United States Courthouse where the trial of Ghislaine Maxwell is being held on November 29, 2021 in New York City. David Dee Delgado/Getty Images

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