

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 28, 2015

The Honorable Eric H. Holder, Jr.  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Holder:

Sex trafficking is the modern equivalent of slavery. The websites that serve as forums for the buying and selling of children are modern slave auctions.

Sex traffickers act anonymously through websites purposely designed to hide the traffickers' activities and enable traffickers to annually exploit at least 100,000 American children. Among these victims approximately 80% are women and children who are bought, sold, and imprisoned in the traffickers' underground sex service industry.

The undersigned Members of the United States Congress believe that the on-line selling of sex with children is a national horror that must be confronted. We encourage your U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to immediately take all necessary steps to aggressively investigate and dismantle the nation's most active sex trafficking website, Backpage.com (Backpage), and its longtime owners Michael Lacey and Jim Larkin. Further, DOJ should investigate the circumstances surrounding Lacey's and Larkin's recent sale of Backpage to an undisclosed Dutch company. In pursuing Backpage, Lacey, and Larkin DOJ should fully employ all its resources, including the FBI's field offices, the IRS Criminal Investigation department, the DOJ Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, the Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs, and local law enforcement departments. You should task your top-tier investigators and prosecutors to this matter.

Backpage, Lacey, and Larkin function in much the same manner as MyRedBook.com (MyRedBook). In June 2014 the FBI raided, seized, and shut down the California based sex trafficking website, MyRedBook, and charged its owner, Eric "Red" Omuro, with one count of interstate travel in the aid of a racketeering enterprise and twenty-four counts of money laundering. On December 11, 2014, DOJ secured its first federal conviction of a website operator for facilitation of prostitution when Omuro pleaded guilty to using the MyRedBook website to facilitate prostitution.

In his plea agreement Omuro admits how he used MyRedBook to facilitate prostitution. In all substantive ways Omuro's factual admissions about his use of MyRedbook apply equally and are parallel to how Lacey and Larkin use Backpage to facilitate prostitution.

Therefore, because of these similarities DOJ, should pursue Backpage, Lacey, and Larkin as aggressively as it pursued MyRedBook and Omuro.

Because of the numerous news reports on how the owners of Backpage facilitate sex trafficking, the website's illegal methods should be well know to DOJ. Like Omuro, Lacey and Larkin have designed Backpage to facilitate and broker illegal commercial sex transactions through anonymous, on-line advertisements, including advertisements involving child sex trafficking victims. Cook County, IL Sheriff, Tom Dart, has conducted nearly 700 sting operations on advertisements appearing in Backpage's "Escorts" section and every advertisement (100%) proved to be a front for prostitution. In short, Backpage is at the center of thinly disguised prostitution network. Its victims – often children – are repeatedly purchased and raped by customers.

In the near future, we anticipate hearing from DOJ about your plan for investigating and pursuing Backpage, Lacey, and Larkin.

Thank you.

Regards,

Clara Kim

Tom Cotton

Richard Shelby

Jim Wagoner

Quinn Blackburn

Thad Cochran

Marsha Blackburn