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Victims of Child Sex Trafficking & Sexual Abuse to Be Protected From Unjust Sentences Under Proposed Legislation

February 7, 2019 -- Hawaii State Representative John Mizuno has introduced first-of-its-kind legislation to protect victims of child sex trafficking and sexual abuse who commit crimes against their traffickers and abusers.

Recent high profile cases like that of [Cyntoia Brown](#), [Alexis Martin](#), and [Sara Kruzan](#) have shined a light on the treatment of child sex trafficking victims who kill their traffickers.

"For me, this bill is a recognition that the harm inflicted upon me as a child was a moral wrong and that society is working to rectify that wrong, said Sara Kruzan, who was sentenced to life without parole for killing the man who had raped and trafficked her from the time she was 11 years old. If as a 16 year old child I was treated with the empathy, compassion and human kindness envisioned by Representative Mizuno's bill I would not have endured nearly 20 years of unjust incarceration. This bill is about igniting hope in others and making a clear statement that our justice system will no longer allow such injustices to be imposed on child victims of sex abuse and sex trafficking."

Self-defense laws don't always apply in such cases because the acts involve premeditation. This has been a sticking point in the law that [HB 932](#) would address so that judges have more options and greater flexibility when handling cases where child sex trafficking victims have hurt or killed their abusers.

"What has happened to young girls like Ms. Kruzan and Ms. Brown is nothing short of a tragic injustice," said Hawaii State Representative John Mizuno. "Children who commit crimes against those who have sexually abused or trafficked them deserve our understanding, compassion, and love, not to be locked away in cages. I am proud to sponsor the first bill in the nation that would protect victims like Cyntoia and Sara, and look forward to this bill becoming law."

Under [HB 932](#), judges will be given greater flexibility when handling cases that involve child victims who have committed crimes against those who have trafficked or sexually assaulted them. The

legislation allows judges to depart from any mandatory minimum sentence, suspend any portion of their sentence, or transfer the child to the jurisdiction of the juvenile or family court where the child will be provided with treatment and services. Judges are encouraged to follow the latter option in such cases.

“It is unconscionable to think that in 2019 child sex trafficking and sexual abuse victims are being sentenced to decades in prison for, what is in essence, acting in self-defense,” said James Dold, the Founder of [Human Rights for Kids](#), a non-profit organization that advocates on behalf of children’s rights. “Girls or boys who are raped, abused, or trafficked should never be sent to prison for committing crimes against their abusers. The continued practice of locking these children away is a human rights abuse and it needs to end now. We hope the people of Hawaii will join us in standing alongside Ms. Kruzan and Representative Mizuno to demand that it end.”

[Human Rights for Kids](#) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion and protection of the human rights of children. We use an integrated, multi-faceted approach which consists of research & public education, coalition building & grassroots mobilization, and policy advocacy & strategic litigation to advance critical human rights on behalf of children in the United States and around the world. We work to protect children from harm; reform justice systems to ensure society focuses on rehabilitating children who come into conflict with the law; protect immigrant, non-native children from harm and discrimination; promote access to quality education for all children; and promote healthy communities for children to ensure access to housing and health care.

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