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MADIGAN: BILL TO AID HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIMS PASSES SENATE***Lawmakers Permit Funding for Human Trafficking Victims to Remove Branding Tattoos***

Springfield – Attorney General Lisa Madigan today applauded Senate lawmakers for their unanimous support of legislation to assist victims of human trafficking who have been branded. With their 58-0 vote, senators joined a unanimous House vote in March to send House Bill 2640 to the Governor for his signature.

Criminal offenders who engage in human trafficking subject their victims to horrific abuse. Increasingly, these offenders forcibly tattoo, or brand, their victims, so the tattoo can serve as a sign of ownership.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. William Delgado and crafted in conjunction with Madigan's office, will allow victims of human trafficking who have been branded by their trafficker to be reimbursed out of the Illinois Crime Victims Compensation Fund for the cost of removing the tattoo. Rep. Kelly Burke sponsored the measure in the House.

"Human trafficking victims are subjected to horrific physical and psychological abuse," Madigan said. "Providing assistance that allows them to eliminate the physical reminders of their enslavement is vital to helping these individuals recover and rebuild their lives."

The bill will add branding to the list of expenses for which a crime victim may be compensated under the Illinois Crime Victims Compensation Act. It requires the victim seek removal of the tattoo with an authorized or licensed tattoo remover.

"Traffickers tattoo victims as a way to psychologically control them," said Delgado. "The Crime Victims Compensation Fund will now be able to reimburse for expenses associated with removing these brands and go a long way in helping victims recover from the crime."

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