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### **Paul Simon Public Policy Institute Visiting Scholar to Offer Testimony on Human Trafficking**

Kimberly Palermo, a visiting scholar at the [Paul Simon](http://paulsimoninstitute.org) Public Policy Institute (PSPPI) at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, has been invited to provide testimony at a public hearing of the bipartisan Illinois Human Trafficking Task Force. The hearing will be held [Monday, August 28, 2017 at 10:00 a.m.](#) at the Memorial Center for Learning and Innovation (MCLI) located at 228 West Miller St, Springfield, Illinois.

Palermo's testimony will focus on her recent survey research into sexual exploitation as a modern form of slavery. In what is believed to be the first state-wide inquiry on human trafficking in the nation, the Spring 2017 Simon Poll included questions developed by her to gather data regarding the general public's awareness, attitudes toward mandated training and prosecution of adult victims who have been trafficked. Palermo's goal was to gauge the views of the general public and raise awareness of this widespread issue that affects thousands of children, women and men while shedding light on the importance of providing protection for survivors of victimization, and ease their repatriation.

The poll found that more than half of Illinoisans were unaware human trafficking affects their area, but a strong majority reported there should be mandated training for law enforcement. Palermo believes such training will enable professionals to identify and ensure survivors are given available resources to escape human trafficking.

Laurie Dunn-Ryznyk, Associate Director/Professor, at the SIU School of Medicine will also be providing testimony along with several experts in the field.

"As a whole, the state can raise awareness of this global issue through increased public education efforts," said Palermo. "These efforts will educate the general public on this pervasive problem and shed light on the reality that human trafficking happens in our communities, not only across national borders. Education and awareness are vital to weakening the supply and demand for human trafficking."

"Kimberly's work addressing the human trafficking issue is exactly what Paul Simon envisioned for the Institute," said Dr. Linda Renee Baker, university professor at the PSPPI. "She has identified a real-world problem and is working toward concrete solutions. I am certain that he would have shared her passion for justice and healing for the victims of human trafficking in all of its forms."

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