

Special News Report

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COMMERCIAL SEX**New measures target exploitation of minors**

Gov. Cayetano's administration and the Legislature made great strides this year in the fight against the commercial sexual exploitation of Hawai'i's minors.

For three years, Sisters Offering Support and Hawai'i Family Forum fought for a comprehensive law prohibiting the use of minors in strip clubs and nude massage parlors. This conduct is gateway activity for prostitution, and the pimps and other exploiters of children have been getting away with it for far too long — and everyone who works in this area knows it.

Not any longer, however, if the governor signs SB 2234. This bill makes it a class-B felony to use a

minor in a strip club or nude massage parlor. We will finally have the legal tools to stop this activity before the minors are lured into prostitution and to hold the perpetrators accountable for exploiting these young people.

In another measure, HB 2426, the Cayetano administration proposed several ways to better protect minors from adult sexual predators who use the Internet to prey on children and to tighten up Hawai'i's child pornography laws.

Most people don't realize that current Hawai'i law outrageously allows pornographers to use 16-year-old minors in their pornography. Hawai'i Family Forum supported the administration measure but asked the Legislature to raise the minor definition age to at least 18, and the Cayetano administration and the Legislature agreed. That is progress.

These are terrific steps in the right direction that will finally provide additional legal tools in the fight against the commercial sexual exploitation of Hawai'i's minors.

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