



**Mike McGinn, Mayor**  
City of Seattle

July 1, 2011

Mr. Jim Larkin  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer  
Village Voice Media, LLC  
1201 East Jefferson  
Phoenix, AZ 85034

Dear Mr. Larkin:

We have a serious problem in Seattle with underage sex trafficking. Children as young as twelve have been exploited in our community. Runaways are particularly vulnerable. On average within 48 hours of leaving home they are solicited for sex. Drug abuse and violence are often right around the corner. Over the past several years we have worked to raise public awareness and dedicated significant resources to the issue. We've worked to get these kids off the street and back in school. And while we have had success with our interventions, as long as there is money to be made in the trafficking of minors this problem will persist.

The Seattle Police Department has identified the use of the adult services section of Backpage as a contributor to the problem. Specifically, they are an "accelerant" of underage prostitution. The problem exists in both the print and online version of the Backpage service. In 2011 alone, SPD detectives uncovered four documented cases of child prostitution openly advertised on the Backpage.com website.

I understand that you have existing policies aimed at preventing the trafficking of minors. But the problem remains. It's time to reexamine your policies. We must do better.

I am inviting you and your staff to sit down with Seattle Police Chief John Diaz and myself to work toward a solution. If we tackle this together, I believe we can find a way forward that better protects youth in Seattle and our country as a whole.

You can reach me at (206) 684-4000 or [mike.mcginn@seattle.gov](mailto:mike.mcginn@seattle.gov). I look forward to working with you soon.

Sincerely,

Mike McGinn  
Mayor