



United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0504
<http://feinstein.senate.gov>

July 12, 2017

The Honorable Jefferson B. Sessions III
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Sessions:

Yesterday, the *Washington Post* reported that Backpage.com hired an overseas company to aggressively solicit sex-related advertisements. That is inexcusable. I urge you to thoroughly investigate the claims made in the article to determine whether federal charges are appropriate.

I have long called for a federal investigation into Backpage.com. Those who knowingly advertise minors for commercial sex must be held accountable. Indeed, Congress made clear that such persons should be held accountable by enacting legislation in 2015 to enable the Justice Department to investigate and prosecute Internet sites that knowingly advertise children for sex. *See* 18 U.S.C. §1591(a)(1).

Despite the enactment of this provision, it appears – according to the article – that the advertisement of minors for commercial sex continued to occur on Backpage.com. These revelations are deeply concerning, particularly since earlier this year, the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations found there was evidence that Backpage.com facilitated online sex trafficking.

I strongly believe that online sex trafficking cannot be prevented without strict federal enforcement. I urge you to investigate the new allegations against Backpage.com, and ask that you report to me quickly what steps are being taken to do so. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dianne Feinstein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dianne" being particularly prominent.

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator