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Columbus City Attorney, Franklin County Sheriff Team Up to Shut Down Illegal Massage Parlor

*Months-long investigation revealed pattern of prostitution at Sunflower Asian Spa in
Hilliard area strip mall*

COLUMBUS, OH—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein and Franklin County Sheriff Dallas Baldwin announced today that their offices' joint efforts led to an emergency court order to immediately vacate and shutter a massage parlor that investigators say was a front for illegal sex acts. It's the second time the City of Columbus has used civil litigation authorized under the state's nuisance abatement code to shut down a potential human trafficking ring operating out of a local massage parlor.

City Attorney Klein's office filed a request for an *ex parte* temporary restraining order in the Franklin County Environmental Court to board up Sunflower Asian Spa, located at [5327 Westpointe Plaza Dr.](#) in a popular retail center near the intersection of Renner Rd. and Hilliard-Rome Rd. In a surprise raid this afternoon around 3:00 p.m., city and county agents enforced the judge's order, evacuating the premises and boarding it up. Representatives from [Asian American Community Services](#) were onsite to assist any of the workers who were in need of help.

“Human trafficking and prostitution are a real problem in our society, and I want to thank the Franklin County Sheriff's office for working with us on this case,” said City Attorney Zach Klein. “Ohio is fourth in the nation for reported human trafficking cases and studies show that women trapped by sex trafficking have mortality rates 200 times greater than average, with the most common causes of death being homicide, suicide, and substance abuse.”

Detectives from the Sheriff's special investigations unit began investigating the business last September after receiving information about potential prostitution and human trafficking occurring at the premises.

According to court documents, investigators obtained consistent evidence that sexual conduct in exchange for money was occurring regularly at the premises from the point of their investigation on September 26, 2018 through March of this year.

Patrons paid \$60 upfront for an hour-long massage and were led to a back room. The patrons

were then typically asked if they wanted a “soft, medium, or hard massage.” Workers usually requested an additional \$40 to perform illegal sex acts, with one individual stating that her “boss” keeps the \$60 initial payment and she “only makes money from tips.”

City law enforcement officials sent notices of the illegal activity occurring at the premises via certified mail to the property owner of record in October and November of last year. While the business Sunflower Asian Spa was never properly registered with the state, investigators determined that Yulian Fu of Grandview Heights is the person in charge of care and control of the premises and the holder of a massage license that expires on April 20, 2019.

“The detectives of our Special Investigations Unit work every day to help fight human trafficking and prostitution,” said Franklin County Sheriff Dallas Baldwin. “Once they began investigating this business, their thoroughness allowed us and City Attorney Klein’s office to shut this place down.”

In filing a civil motion for injunctive relief along with the emergency TRO request, the City Attorney’s office is seeking to prove that the owner/operators are guilty of maintaining a nuisance by establishing that they, as owners of the premises, “knew of, participated in, or acquiesced to the activity which constituted the nuisance” as prescribed by [Chapter 3767](#) of the Ohio Revised Code.

The hearing for preliminary and permanent injunctive relief is scheduled for 1:00 p.m. on April 15, 2019.

If the property is ultimately declared to be a statutorily defined public nuisance, state law grants the court authority to order the premises shut down for up to one year following the permanent injunction hearing.

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