



2025

ATIP Global Policy Summit

September 18, 2025 | U.S. Senate – Washington, DC



**Disrupting the Market: Stopping the Demand for
Human Trafficking and Exploitation**



TaskforceonHT.org | Washington, DC | 9/18/2025

ATIP Global Policy Summit

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Policy stops human trafficking and exploitation at the root.

The ATIP (Anti-Trafficking in Persons) Global Policy Summit is a convening of legislators, senior government leaders, subject matter experts and lived experience experts designed to share practical solutions they can implement in their countries or regions. Despite efforts over the past several decades, human trafficking and exploitation continues to increase. Policy fills a critical gap to empower law enforcement, prosecutors and survivors through partnership among lawmakers who provide the laws and resources frontline responders need to prevent, protect and prosecute. Legislation is one of the most neglected yet necessary forms of international diplomacy. This is why the Interparliamentary Taskforce on Human Trafficking (ITHT) exists as the first global consortium to convene lawmakers and lived-experience experts committed to stopping the human suffering caused by human trafficking and exploitation through education to legislators.

Agenda

- 9:00am** Registration
- 9:30am** ATIP Policy Roundtable on US Legislation with US Members of Congress
Sponsor: Street Grace
- 11:45am** Group Photo
- 12:00pm** Lunch – Sponsor: Hope for Justice
- 1:00pm** Special Presentation: Stopping the Demand for Orphanage Trafficking
- 1:30 pm** Panel Presentation: Stopping the Demand for Child Exploitation & Sex Trafficking
- 2:45pm** Panel Presentation: Stopping the Demand for Forced Labor
- 3:45pm** Final Statements
- 4:00pm** Commencement

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY TASKFORCE
ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

www.TaskforceonHT.org

Dear Partner,

Human trafficking and child exploitation are some of the greatest human rights crimes of our time—impacting every nation and community in the world. They deprive people of their most basic rights and freedoms while stripping them of their dignity. Human trafficking is also the fastest growing criminal enterprise in the world, with long-lasting and often irreparable consequences for victims, their families, and their communities.

Human trafficking takes many forms: sexual exploitation, labor exploitation, organ harvesting, orphanage trafficking, forced marriage, and even government sponsored forced labor. These atrocities generate staggering profits that fund criminal enterprises and threaten national security. Yet behind every number is an individual: a teenager sold by her “boyfriend” for sex; a young man forced to work in a toxic mineshaft; a 13-year-old girl sold by her parents into a “marriage” with a man twice her age; an 8-year-old boy thrown from a fishing boat to untangle nets; a Uyghur man forced into a labor camp to process cotton. For too many victims, human trafficking means the end of childhood, abandoned education, and in some cases, the loss of life itself.

This crime is unique among human rights abuses because it not only devastates vulnerable individuals but also strengthens organized crime and fuels global instability. Human trafficking is one of the most urgent and addressable crises of our time. An industry propped up by a sophisticated network of international criminal actors demands an equally sophisticated network of international and cross-sector partners working together to dismantle it. And at the heart of that network, we need lawmakers, government leaders, and grassroots activists who are willing to champion the cause. You are critical to our success.

Collaboration is what allows us to go upstream and address this crisis at the root policy level. By changing policies—and the public will that drives them—we can move closer to ending trafficking in all its forms. Thank you for protecting the innocent, empowering the vulnerable, and helping provide the resources to fight this crime. Together, we can confront the greatest human rights challenge of our time and change the course of history.

With gratitude,

Anne Basham

Chair, Interparliamentary Taskforce on Human Trafficking (ITHT)



THE PROBLEM

How can governments impact the DEMAND for human trafficking and exploitation?

Human trafficking and exploitation exists because there is a demand for it. Until we address this demand, traffickers and abusers will continue to exploit vulnerable individuals to meet it. Demand reduction is not just a complementary strategy—it is a foundational pillar in dismantling criminal networks. By confronting the systems, industries, and individuals who fuel exploitation, we can disrupt the profit motives that drive trafficking in the first place. Effective demand reduction policies shift the burden off survivors and place it where it belongs: on those who create the market for human lives. Without reducing demand, we will never end trafficking.

Why is legislation important?

Good laws save lives. Policy stops human rights violations at the root.

Despite efforts over the past several decades, human trafficking continues to increase. Strong policy is critical, as it creates the structure needed for law enforcement, prosecutors and survivors to interact and partner together to prevent, protect and prosecute. Trafficking and exploitation are transnational crimes which requires multilateral solutions. Legislation is one of the most neglected yet necessary forms of international diplomacy. You can be part of empowering frontline responders and support survivors through a multi-faceted approach that assists legislators in scoping legislative strategy, building parliamentary coalitions, crafting anti-trafficking legislation, creating public awareness and education programs, and advocating nationally and internationally to strengthen anti-trafficking laws.

Legislators are uniquely positioned to shape the legal, social, and economic conditions that either allow human trafficking to thrive—or bring it to an end. Through strong laws, oversight, and funding, lawmakers can dismantle the systems that enable traffickers and buyers to operate with impunity. Legislators have the power to hold industries accountable, close legal loopholes, and ensure that survivors are protected—not punished. They can advance demand reduction strategies that target exploiters, not the exploited, and invest in long-term prevention efforts. In short, without legislative leadership, lasting change is impossible. The fight against human trafficking requires bold, informed, and coordinated action from lawmakers at every level.

IMPACT STATEMENTS

**These are statements submitted by participants of the
ATIP Global Policy Summit.**

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Issue Spotlight

GRACIE ACT - RECORD ALL CPS INTERVIEWS

The GRACIE Act (Generating Recording of All CPS Interviews Everywhere) requires states to provide the best for our children by updating CPS interview protocols to require mandatory audio or video recordings of all CPS Interviews, similar to DOJ mandated interrogation recordings and police body cameras.

ENHANCED DEMAND PENALTIES AND PROSECUTIONS

Demand fuels Human Trafficking. Penalties should be enhanced to curb the demand that exploits the vulnerable. In all 50 states, solicitation should be a felony. Laws should also clarify that if you attempt to solicit a minor, but are talking to an undercover cop, it is treated the same as if a minor were actually contacted.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE - VACATUR FOR SURVIVORS

Human Trafficking Survivors often have criminal records obtained while they were being trafficked. These charges and convictions can hinder their ability to obtain employment, housing, loans, and education; and lead to continued vulnerability for exploitation. Vacatur and record restriction laws can help trafficking survivors succeed, and are an important step in establishing true justice.



POLICY



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END SEX TRAFFICKING BY MAKING SEX BUYING FELONY

Sex trafficking exists because there is a strong consumer base of male buyers willing to purchase and exploit victims; for example, research suggests 1 out of 50 male adults in the United States have purchased sex.^[1] By reducing the number of buyers, we can shrink the amount of money flowing into the sex trafficking market and thereby cripple the market itself. In plain terms, the clear way to end trafficking is to target buyers.

Currently, however, despite driving the illegal sex market with their money and criminal behavior, buyers are far less frequently arrested and rarely receive meaningful punishment even when they are.

Increasing the penalty for purchasing sex will make buyers think twice before buying another person. To our citizens, this change sends a clear message: we protect the vulnerable and place accountability where it belongs—on the criminals who make sex trafficking profitable. To our front-line defenders, it firmly establishes that arresting and prosecuting buyers is a priority because our Legislature is serious about ending trafficking.

Increased penalties will make a difference in the illegal sex market. Stiffer penalties reduce criminal frequency and may shape public attitudes. Additionally, what is known about sex buyers indicates that:

- Male sex buyers are more sexually violent than male non-sex buyers.²
- 66% of male sex buyers know women are “lured, tricked or trafficked into prostitution” but purchase sex from them anyway.²
- 41% of male sex buyers had purchased a woman who they knew was controlled by a pimp and 96% of them knew purchasing a child from a pimp was an option in United States bars, massage parlors, and other areas women are prostituted.²
- 1 out of every 50 male adults have purchased sex in the United States.¹
- Jail or prison time is the second most effective deterrent to buying sex, but the duration of time a sex buyer has to serve for the crime is critical.²
- According to research, 80% of male sex buyers would be deterred from purchasing sex if jail or prison time was a punishment, while only 17 percent are deterred by fines. The longer the sentence, the greater the deterrence ²

Sex buyers are culpable, deterrable, and catchable and thus represent the logical market component to attack if we are serious about significantly reducing human trafficking. Higher penalties work—Texas made sex-buying a felony on the first offense in September 2022 and this has triggered a record eight-fold increase in buyer arrests. Other states, including North Carolina have followed. Legislation that increases penalties for buyers is the legislation that will keep up moving forward in the fight against exploitation.

[1] Roe-Sepowitz, D., Bontrager, S., Pickett, J., & Kosloski, A. (2019). Estimating the Sex Buying behavior of Adult Males in the United States: List T experiment and direct question estimates. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 41-48.

[2] Farley, M., Golding, J., Matthews, E., Malamuth, N., & Jarrett, L. (2017). Comparing Sex Buyers With Men Who Do Not Buy Sex: New Data on Prostitution and Trafficking. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 3601-3625.



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GRACIE Act: Generate Recordings of All CPS Interviews Everywhere

Secret Interviews are Unsafe Interviews: Child testimonies must be recorded

Executive Summary:

Child Protective Services (CPS) interview protocols are outdated and require reform. Mandatory audio recordings of all CPS interviews are a crucial accountability measure, similar to DOJ-mandated interrogation recordings and police body cameras. **The GRACIE Act incentivizes states to modernize their CPS interview protocols to require mandatory audio or video recordings of all interviews in order to protect children from trafficking, abuse, and unnecessary removals.**

Street Grace was founded in 2009 with the mission to eradicate the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC). They have been on the frontlines of the foster care/child exploitation pipeline, and this policy addresses a critical gap.

Key Facts and Policy Solutions:

- **37.4% of children in the United States will be interviewed by CPS before age 18.** These initial interviews are generally conducted spontaneously at the child's school or home by a social worker who has been trained by CPS in interviewing techniques. The child's statements are written down by the caseworker with no witnesses or accountability for accuracy of reporting. This creates an opportunity for the child's testimony to be inaccurately portrayed or even silenced. The accuracy, accountability, and efficiency of interviews could be substantially improved if these initial interviews were recorded, and this is considered standard best practices at Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) and elsewhere. Additionally, recordings reduce trauma to the child because it potentially also reduces the number of interviews required by CPS.
- **More than 60% of child trafficking victims are current or former foster youth.** Unfortunately, many children are targeted by traffickers while in foster care. Child Protection Services (CPS) is the gatekeeper to the foster system, and they have protocols which can be enhanced to ensure that children's testimonies are accurately recorded.
- The Department of Justice and most state police departments recordings of all interrogations require body cameras. A similar accountability measure is long overdue in child welfare. **Recordings of all interviews by CPS ensures the integrity of the interview** and the preservation of the child's testimony.

Street Grace
info@streetgrace.org
streetgrace.org

Support the GRACIE Act!



BECAUSE CHILDREN ARE PRICELESS



GRACIE Act: Generate Recordings of All CPS Interviews Everywhere

Secret Interviews are Unsafe Interviews: Child testimonies must be recorded

Key Facts and Policy Solutions CONT':

- The GRACIE Act incentivizes states to modernize their CPS interview protocols to **require mandatory audio or video recordings of all interviews.**
- This policy **ensures accountability for CPS caseworkers in contact with children**, enhanced efforts to increase the rate of victim identification (0.4% currently), and prevention of further harm to children in vulnerable situations.
- The Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has strongly advised electronically recording children's interviews to **ensure "the interview process [is] transparent" and provide documentation of the interviewee's behavior and language with the children—including appropriate or "inappropriate interactions."**
- The National Children's Advocacy Center, which revolutionized the United States' response to child sexual abuse and now operates over one thousand centers in the United States and 41 countries globally, states that **"electronic recordings are the most complete and accurate way to document" children's interviews** and applies video recording for child interviews at 90% of its facilities nationally.
- The National Coalition for Child Protection Reform, a group of academics and practitioners affiliated with New York University Law School, Washington University Law School, University of Pennsylvania, and Legal Services for New York City, recommends that as **a matter of civil due process**, "all interviews conducted by CPS personnel ... should be videotaped" and that information from any interview that is not recorded should be inadmissible [in] all court proceedings."

States with GRACIE Act Legislation in Process:

Federal (Senators Blackburn and Ossoff), Arizona, Florida, Illinois

Organizational Endorsements:

Street Grace, Hope for Justice, 3Strands Global, National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE), Engage Together, No Trafficking Zones, Pearl at the Mailbox, The Foundation United, Interparliamentary Taskforce on Human Trafficking, Paving the Way Foundation, Institute for Shelter Care, Empowered Network, Lighthouse for Life, Love Never Fails, Compassion First, Survivor Led Solutions, Rights 4 Girls, Bridge 2 Future, Resiliency Foundation, World Without Exploitation, Lynn's Warriors, Yellowstone Human Trafficking Task Force, Chains Interrupted, One More Child, CRST Tribal Education Agency, Campaign Against Human Trafficking – CAHT, Porn Free Colorado

Street Grace
info@streetgrace.org
streetgrace.org

Support the GRACIE Act!



BECAUSE CHILDREN ARE PRICELESS

Hello,

My name is Camila Zolfaghari and I am the Vice President of Government Affairs for Street Grace and the former Chief Human Trafficking Prosecutor for the Georgia Attorney General. Street Grace is a national anti-trafficking organization founded by a group of churches in Atlanta, Georgia. For nearly two decades, Street Grace has had a mission to eradicate the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC).

The GRACIE Act (Generating Recording of All CPS Interviews Everywhere) requires states to provide the best for our children by updating CPS interview protocols to require mandatory audio or video recordings of all CPS Interviews, similar to DOJ mandated interrogation recordings and police body cameras.

Human traffickers prey on the most vulnerable. Most minor trafficking victims have multiple interactions with CPS before, during, and after their trafficking. **Research published using data from Street Grace's direct services has found that 65% of minor victims of trafficking have a history of placement in foster care, and the average number of out-of-home placements was 3.47 (Furlong & Hinnant, 2024). Research has shown that "approximately 1 out of 5 children in foster care have been paid by someone for sex." (Courtney et al, 2007).** Only a very small portion of these cases result in an exploiter being prosecuted.

As a long-time human trafficking prosecutor, I heavily relied on recorded law enforcement forensic interviews in my prosecutions—but rarely, if ever, was I able to use the scribbled or typed unreliable notes from a CPS interview.

Why the GRACIE Act is Important:

- Recorded interviews will not only be useful for prosecutions but also **decrease the number of times a victim needs to recount their traumatic experiences.**
- Recorded interviews can capture **more detailed information**, leading to earlier identification of trafficking victims and the ability to hold traffickers accountable.
- Earlier intervention can significantly impact the victim's **recovery process** and their ability to participate in prosecutions.

The GRACIE Act is a vital step toward protecting vulnerable children and ensuring justice for trafficking survivors. We urge you to support this critical legislation and stand with us in the fight to end the exploitation of children.

Sincerely,

Camila Zolfaghari

Camila W Zolfaghari, JD, LLM
Vice President of Government Affairs
camila@streetgrace.org

Support the **GRACIE Act!**



BECAUSE CHILDREN ARE PRICELESS

Vacatur and Record Restriction



Problem

Human Trafficking Survivors often have criminal records obtained while they were being trafficked. These charges and convictions can hinder their ability to obtain employment, housing, loans, and education; and lead to continued vulnerability for exploitation. New vacatur and record restriction laws can help trafficking survivors succeed, and are an important step in establishing true justice.

Law

With the passing of SB 435 in 2020 and SB 565 in 2022, there is now a clear path for vacatur and record restriction for all trafficking survivors. This is one of the strongest and broadest laws of its type in the country. The law applies to crimes ranging from small misdemeanors to serious felonies. There are two possible remedies depending on whether the record was “as a direct result” of the trafficking (OCGA § 17-10-21) or while being trafficked (OCGA § 35-3-37).

Need

With the changes made to the law this year, even more Human Trafficking Survivors qualify for and are seeking help vacating their criminal records. The Street Grace Justice Project has survivors waiting for legal assistance and will provide training for attorneys offering legal assistance to human trafficking survivors in a manner that brings restoration and hope, while protecting the well-being of each survivor.

Opportunity

This is an excellent opportunity to serve this under-resourced, highly vulnerable population through pro bono service. Attorneys who have taken these cases in the past year have found these cases to be extremely rewarding. The survivors who have had their records cleared have found it to be truly life changing and many are now able to find jobs, housing, and receive education assistance.

We have assembled a team attorneys led by former US Ambassador-at-Large to Combat Human Trafficking Susan Coppedge and former Georgia Attorney General Sam Olens, who are working alongside the Street Grace Justice Project, to ensure that the attorneys who handle these cases are equipped to understand the complexities of human trafficking and handle the cases in a trauma-informed manner. We are seeking a pro bono attorneys willing to represent a survivor and will provide training, forms, and expert support throughout the case. .

For more information contact: camila@streetgrace.org

ORPHANAGE TRAFFICKING: WHAT YOU CAN DO AS A LEGISLATOR

WHAT IS ORPHANAGE TRAFFICKING AND WHO ARE THE TRAFFICKERS?

Orphanages are a type of residential care institution for children, where care is provided by staff or volunteers in a group setting. Other terms synonymous with orphanages include children's villages, children's homes, shelters, and in some instances, boarding schools.

Up to eight million children live in orphanages across the world, and 80% of them have at least one living relative who could care for them with support. Research shows that most children who live in orphanages or other residential care settings have at least one living parent or family member, many of whom could provide care for them if they could access support. Orphanage trafficking refers to the transfer or recruitment of children into orphanages, or residential care settings, for the purpose of exploitation and/or profit. Orphanage trafficking is driven mainly by donor and volunteer interest in supporting children in orphanages. More 'orphans' in orphanages creates an emotional appeal that attracts more money, in-kind donations, volunteers, and, in some cases, adoption revenue.

Orphanage traffickers are those who recruit children from vulnerable families or situations and transfer or receive them into orphanages with an ultimate purpose of exploitation or profit. The trafficking of children into orphanages encompasses those who receive, transport and harbor these children. Traffickers may be orphanage directors or staff, recruiters who search for children (sometimes called "child finders"), community leaders or members, or civil servants seeking to personally profit from referring children into care. Individual donors and volunteers are rarely involved in the act of trafficking though they may be complicit when they urge orphanages to obtain more children for them to support. The cycle of trauma is perpetuated when voluntourists form connections with the children only to depart, reinforcing the belief that those who care will eventually leave.

IN ADDITION TO THE PALERMO PROTOCOL, WHAT ARE THE APPLICABLE INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS?

[A/RES/74/133 2019 UNGA Resolution on the Rights of the Child, Article 35](#): Urges States to take action to ensure the enjoyment of human rights for all children without parental



"AN INSTITUTION CAN NEVER BE HOME."

– STEPHEN UCEMBE, LIVED EXPERIENCE EXPERT (KENYA)

care, in accordance with the international human rights framework [...], and also to take action to provide a range of alternative care options and to protect all children without parental care, including by: [...]

(t) Taking appropriate measures to protect children who are victims of trafficking and are deprived of parental care, as well as enacting and enforcing legislation to prevent and combat the trafficking in and exploitation of children in care facilities, and supporting children who are victims of human trafficking in returning to their families and in receiving appropriate mental health and psychological assistance that is victim-centred and trauma-informed, and taking appropriate measures to prevent and address the harms related to volunteering programmes in orphanages, including in the context of tourism, which can lead to trafficking and exploitation.

[A/77/41 2022 Committee on the Rights of the Child: Recommendations from 2021 Day of General Discussion on children's rights and alternative care Annex II, D.1.29](#): States should adopt legislation and regulations to eliminate orphanage tourism and volunteering in orphanages, prevent incentives driving institutionalization and family separation, and ensure adequate offenses and penalties to prevent and enable the prosecution of violations of children's rights in alternative care, including orphanage trafficking.

[CRPD/C/5 2022 Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Guidelines on the deinstitutionalization, including in emergencies. XII.143](#): States parties should prevent volunteering by foreign tourists in institutions (known as "voluntourism"), by providing appropriate travel guidance and raising awareness about the Convention and the dangers of institutionalization.



ADVOCATE: Legislators can advocate to other government agencies, leaders and civic organizations which provide oversight.

- Advocate for families. Instead of removing children from their home, poverty should be removed from the home. Increased home-based care within families ensures that children are not being exploited.
- Advocate for upstream services that address the vulnerabilities that put children at risk of being separated from their families and recruited into orphanages.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Governments should employ a whole of government approach to:

EDUCATE: Lawmakers have a unique platform to educate the public about orphanage trafficking.

- Awareness raising and capacity building: Legislators can socialize the government position, laws, regulations, and guidelines, and build the capacity for compliance and enforcement.
- “Voluntourism”: Legislators can promote initiatives and public awareness campaigns like travel advisories that warn people of the harms of orphanage volunteering.
- The media: Share this Legislative Toolkit and the orphanage trafficking awareness video through your media channels. Consider writing an article on the topic on behalf of your nation.

LEGISLATE: The proliferation of orphanages in many parts of the world is because governments fail to have adequate laws that prioritize child protection.

- Recognize orphanage trafficking as a form of modern slavery: Legislators can create a clear position recognizing orphanage trafficking as a form of child trafficking in legislation and a clear position recognizing the harms of orphanage volunteering. Such laws should include strong penalties for those involved in trafficking and regulations against orphanage tourism and volunteering (see model legislation in the ITHT Legislative Toolkit).
- Multi sector regulation: Legislators can regulate charities' overseas activities and volunteering activities with children across all sectors, and prohibit orphanage tourism and voluntourism.
- Data collection, data analysis, and data sharing: Legislators can develop a baseline understanding of the scope and scale of the issues to track progress and analyze trends and to advance international cooperation on this transnational issue.



HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- Read the Interparliamentary Taskforce on Human Trafficking Legislative Toolkit: <https://TaskforceonHT.org/orphanage-trafficking>



Legislative Toolkit

- See the **Thematic Brief on Voluntourism and Trafficking in Orphanages**.
- Visit the following websites: **The Better Care Network**, **ReThink Orphanages**, or **Global Volunteering Standards**.



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

Orphanage trafficking refers to the recruitment or transfer of children — often unnecessarily — into residential care institutions for the purpose of exploitation or financial gain. This can include:

- Use of children in voluntourism experiences (e.g., performing, interacting with tourists)
- Exploiting children in fundraising or promotional material
- In some cases, sexual exploitation, forced labor, or neglect

Source: OSCE publication: The Role of OSCE Participating States in Combating Orphanage Trafficking (March 2025); U.S. Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report (2024), Haiti country narrative.

Globally, an estimated 80% of children in orphanages have at least one living parent. Often, families are misled or pressured to place children in institutions due to poverty, a lack of services, or perceptions that institutional care is “better.”

Source: OSCE publication (2025); Lumos Foundation study on Haiti; APEC Study on Voluntourism and Child Protection (2017).

“**Voluntourism**” — short-term, often unqualified volunteering in overseas orphanages — unintentionally fuels orphanage trafficking by creating demand for children to be placed in care. Institutions often exploit this demand for profit, incentivizing unnecessary child institutionalisation.

- Industry worth: \$2.7 billion USD annually
- Over 4 million Americans volunteer in orphanages overseas each year
- 800+ organizations offer such voluntourism opportunities in 151 countries

Source: OSCE side event at 2021 Alliance Conference (Protecting the Most Vulnerable); OSCE publication (2025); APEC Report (2017); Lumos, Fact Sheet on Orphanage Trafficking.

What is the OSCE doing about this?

1. 2025 OSCE Publication, “The role of OSCE participating States in combating orphanage trafficking”: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/c/588718.pdf>

Launched at the 25th High-Level Alliance Against Trafficking in Persons Conference (March 2025), The Role of OSCE Participating States in Combating Orphanage Trafficking provides:

- Analysis of recruitment pathways
- Demand and supply-side drivers
- Promising practices and policy options

2. Political engagement

- Raising the specific issue with OSCE participating States’ government officials and Parliamentarians, including in the UK Parliament in November 2024 and in the Vatican in May 2025

3. Workshops and Conferences

- Vulnerability workshops in Bosnia, Istanbul, Romania, & Uzbekistan
- Side event at World Humanitarian and Development Conference (2023)
- Partnership with CBSS on regional training and policy discussions

4. Research on Online Platforms

- Review platforms like Google Maps have exposed child locations and inappropriate content
- Cases of predators using platforms (e.g., *Mpagi Didas Mark Wigan*, Uganda) to raise funds, intimidate witnesses, and perpetuate abuse

5. Social Media Engagement

- Working with TikTok to deprioritize viral trends exploiting children (e.g., birthday parties in orphanages)

Sources:

- OSCE, 2025 Alliance Conference Report & Publication
- OSCE–CBSS Webinar Series (2023–2025)

- OSCE Research Brief on Orphanage Listings on Online Platforms (forthcoming)
- WHDC 2023 side event materials

What should U.S. legislators do?

- Close legal gaps: Recognize orphanage trafficking in anti-trafficking and child protection legislation
- Strengthen nonprofit regulation: Ensure overseas charitable support aligns with international child rights norms
- Redirect aid: Support family-based care, community systems, and deinstitutionalization programs
- Regulate voluntourism: Establish oversight for volunteering and tourism involving children abroad

Source: OSCE 2025 Publication; Case studies from Australia, Ireland, UK; Kigali Declaration (2022).

What should tech companies do?

- Prohibit paid or unpaid promotion of orphanage tourism
- Monitor and remove exploitative reviews, posts, and images
- Cooperate with law enforcement on trafficking investigations
- Support educational campaigns, e.g.:
 - The Love You Give (Better Care Network)
 - HelpingNotHelping (global advocacy)
 - Dear Volunteer and Thanks, No Thanks (Netherlands)

Source: OSCE online platform research; Better Care Network campaigns (2023–2025); Ugandan court case: Director Mpagi Didas Mark Wigan (2023–2024)



ATIP Global Policy Summit: Canadian Legislation Briefing

Prepared by Arnold Viersen, Member of Parliament for Peace River – Westlock
September 18, 2025
US Capitol – Washington, DC

Bill S-209 – Protecting Young Persons from Exposure to Pornography Act

Senate Sponsor: Senator Julie Miville-Dechêne

Background

Bill S-209 was reintroduced by independent Senator Julie Miville-Dechêne on May 28, 2025. A previous version of the Bill S-210 had been adopted by the Senate in 2023 without opposition but died in the House of Commons when a Canadian federal election was called in 2025.

Legislation

The Protecting Young Persons from Exposure to Pornography Act, or Bill S-209, seeks to protect Canadian children from accessing pornographic material online by requiring age-verification.

- Makes it an offence for organizations to make pornographic material available to young persons on the Internet, ensuring Canada extends the same protection to minors online as we do offline.
- Enables a designated enforcement authority to take steps to prevent pornographic material from being made available to young persons on the Internet in Canada.
- Requires age-verification methods to safeguard both children and privacy rights through minimum standards and best practices.

Key Points

- On average, children first view sexually explicit material online at 11 years old.
- A 2022 French Senate report found 90% of pornographic scenes includes sexual violence.
- Two thirds of children aged 14 have been exposed to sexually explicit content.
- The Canadian Centre for Child Protection has highlighted the harms of pornography exposure on children, including an increase in peer-to-peer sexual abuse among youth.

We have a responsibility to protect the mental health & development of minors from the harmful effects of accessing violent sexually explicit material online content.

Bill S-### – National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking Act

Senate Sponsor: Senator Salma Ataullahjan

House of Commons Sponsor: MP Arnold Viersen

Background

The National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking Act will be reintroduced in the Canadian Senate later in September 2025 by Conservative Senator Salma Ataullahjan. In the previous Parliament, the Bill had been introduced as Bill S-263 in the Senate and Bill C-308 in the House of Commons.

Legislation

The Bill requires the Government of Canada to maintain a national strategy to combat human trafficking that:

- that aims to end human trafficking,
- addresses the harm suffered by individuals who have experienced human trafficking
- and enhances support to those individuals.

The Bill also

- sets out key measures that must be included in the national strategy and requires the strategy to include objectives and timelines.
- requires consultation with survivors and a review every 5 years.
- requires the Minister of Public Safety to table an annual report in Parliament on the government's progress to combat human trafficking.

Key Points

- Human trafficking is profitable, it's brutal and it's only growing in Canada.
- Victims, survivors, and the frontline agencies that serve them continue to face challenges and barriers.
- This Bill will ensure that Canada undertakes long-term approach to ending human trafficking that centres the voices of survivors, provides robust supports, puts more traffickers in jail and empowers Canadians to tackle this crime in their own communities.

Bill S-### – Stop Internet Sexual Exploitation Act

Senate Sponsor: TBC

House of Commons Sponsor: MP Arnold Viersen

Background

The Stop Internet Sexual Exploitation Act will be introduced in the Canadian Senate later this fall. In the previous Parliament, the Bill had been introduced as Bill C-270 in the House of Commons.

Legislation

The Bill has one primary goal: To require the verification of the age and consent of each person portrayed in pornographic material prior to creation and distribution. It also allows individuals to revoke consent.

The Bill adds two prohibitions to the Canadian Criminal Code

- Making pornographic material without verifying the age and consent
- Distributing pornographic material without verifying the age and consent

Aggravating factors:

- Material that actually depicts minors or made without consent
- Material that depicts obscenity (cruelty, violence) s163(8) or hatred towards an identifiable group s. 318(4).

Key Points

- In Canada, there is no requirement for pornography companies to verify consent of individual portrayed when creating and distributing explicit material. When it comes to age, the child pornography, CC prohibitions create a reverse onus whereby it is up to law enforcement to prove the person depicted is under 18. This is incredibly burdensome to Internet Child Exploitation Units.
- As survivors and journalists have exposed, this has allowed companies like MindGeek to operate and profit with impunity while they created and distributed explicit with no verification of age or consent.
- Survivors of child exploitation, sex trafficking and rape have been forced to track down their own abuse.
- It is time to place the burden of due diligence and corporate responsibility on companies and rather than survivors and law enforcement.

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF EXPLOITATION: GHANA'S VISION TO HALT HUMAN TRAFFICKING AT ITS ROOT

A MARKET-BASED APPROACH TO ERADICATING EXPLOITATION

BY: DAVIS ANSAH OPOKU, MP
MPRAESO CONSTITUENCY
VICE CHAIR, PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Introduction

Human trafficking rests on a simple economic premise: where there is demand, supply follows. In Ghana, this demand is visible in predictable markets. Children are forced to harvest cocoa under dangerous conditions, boys risk their lives in the murky waters of Lake Volta to untangle fishing nets, young women are sold into brothels in mining towns, and desperate workers fall prey to fraudulent recruitment that leaves them in bondage abroad.

To break this cycle, we must make trafficking an economically unattractive venture. This requires more than goodwill. It demands legislative reform, strict enforcement, public investment, safe labour migration, and coordinated action across government, industry, civil society, and faith institutions.

Understanding Ghana's Exploitation Economy

1. Agriculture and Mining

Cocoa and artisanal gold mining still depend on child labour, with intermediaries and buyers profiting from artificially cheap labour.

2. Lake Volta Fishing

Children are forced into debt bondage and life-threatening tasks that adults avoid.

3. Commercial Sexual Exploitation

Sex trafficking of women and minors continues in urban centres and mining settlements with little fear of legal consequences.

4. The Orphanage Sector

Unregulated institutions create “paper orphans” – children with parents are presented as orphans to attract donations and volunteers.

5. International Labour Trafficking

Unregulated recruitment processes expose Ghanaians, especially women, to exploitation as domestic workers in the Gulf States.

6. Urban Informal Labour

Exploitation is also widespread in informal urban work, particularly in construction and domestic service.

Ghana’s Five-Pillar Action Framework

Pillar 1: Legal Improvement and Enforcement

- Amend the Human Trafficking Act to criminalise knowingly using trafficked labour or commercial sex.
- Make corporations liable for trafficking in their supply chains, unless they can show clear due diligence.
- Mandate victim compensation and asset confiscation in trafficking cases.
- Set strict timelines so that cases conclude within 60 days (or 180 if video testimony is used).

Pillar 2: Using Public Spending to Drive Change

- Require all government contracts to include anti-trafficking clauses, with quarterly compliance reports to Parliament.
- Establish a public debarment register and permanently bar suppliers who fail to act on violations.
- Audit procurement in high-risk sectors such as cocoa, gold, construction, and facility maintenance.

Pillar 3: Child Welfare Reform

- Impose a 12-month moratorium on licensing new residential facilities while a national audit is conducted.
- Close unlicensed institutions and use the Human Trafficking Fund to reunite children with families.
- Ban volunteer tourism in orphanages and require charities to complete safeguarding audits.
- Strengthen district-level social welfare offices with trained, independent officers.

Pillar 4: Safe Labour Migration

- Negotiate bilateral agreements that ensure fair wages, rest days, verified contracts, and grievance systems.
- Establish a single digital recruitment system to regulate agencies.
- Maintain the ban on direct household recruitment for overseas work until proper safeguards are in place.

Pillar 5: Technology and Financial Accountability

- Require online platforms to remove exploitative content within 24 hours while retaining records for law enforcement.
- Mandate financial institutions to report suspicious transactions linked to trafficking.
- Develop technology for victim identification and service coordination.

Building National Consensus

This effort must rest on three Ghanaian values: the dignity of human beings, the integrity of families, and the value of honest work.

Chiefs should monitor rural labour practices. Faith leaders must identify vulnerable families. Trade unions should guard workers' rights. Women's organisations need to provide care for survivors, while youth groups monitor the digital space. Businesses must prove their supply chains are free from exploitation.

Conclusion

This framework gives Ghana the opportunity to lead Africa with a systemic solution to trafficking. By disrupting the economics of exploitation, protecting children, strengthening families, and cleaning up supply chains, Ghana can demonstrate that profit must never be drawn from human misery.

The task is ambitious but achievable. Parliament must show courage in passing strong laws. Law enforcement must pursue buyers and facilitators. Businesses must take responsibility for their supply chains. Communities must protect the vulnerable.

Together, we can ensure that people are never treated as commodities, children grow up in families and not institutions, and work becomes a source of dignity rather than degradation. Exploitation must be left behind as a failed business model of the past.

The time for half measures has ended. The time for action is now.

Trafficking and Slavery in the New Energy Sector

Senator Linda Reynolds, Australia

Today climate change zealots are stubbornly resistant to acknowledging their own well documented 'Inconvenient Truth'. That their aggressive and uncompromising net zero 'at all costs' approach is directly responsible for increasing the numbers of people trafficked into slavery. It is also resulting in shocking environmental destruction in many global south nations.

As the world transitions to low and no carbon emission technologies, we must not go green on the backs of the forced labour of millions of men, women and children. Therefore, it should be self-evident that carbon reduction policy implementation must uphold the highest human rights, anti-slavery and environmental standards.

Sadly, few if any, global north governments are taking any real action to ensure carbon reduction policies are implemented ethically and sustainably.

Consequently, an increasingly significant driver of global trafficking and slavery is the supply chain for new energy minerals and technologies. Profits and competitive advantages are exponentially and rapidly growing off the backs of those trafficked and trapped into slavery and forced labour.

Slave and forced Labour is riddled throughout all clean energy supply chains, from minerals extraction to component production and

product assembly. Yes - these are all crucial to the renewable energy transition. But - they are only as clean and as ethical as the energy and the components required to produce them.

The greatest beneficiary of our inaction is the Chinese Communist Party and their state owned and linked enterprises. They use the Uyghur and other Muslim minorities in forced labour camps in Xinjiang. They exploit Tibetan children who transition from Han Chinese 'boarding schools' into forced labour in China. They use North Koreans who have been sold by their government as indentured forced labour.

These are the people who are forced to mine the minerals and rare earths and fabricate the components of wind turbines, solar panels, batteries and EV's. They process quartz for solar panel photovoltaic cells, they process lithium, they produce cathodes, anodes, and lithium-ion battery cells. They process manganese for electric vehicle batteries, they smelt aluminium and copper, they process uranium, nickel and zinc. They are the children forced to mine cobalt and rare earths.

This reliance on slave and forced labour significantly distorts the global markets for critical metals, minerals and rare earths as well as the new energy technology products themselves.

The global transition to carbon net zero must no longer come at the cost of human servitude and the environment. It is well past time for those of us who can to speak up and take a stand to ensure their energy transition is sustainable and slavery free. People and the

environment both matter. An inconvenient truth, but the truth nonetheless.



Campaign for Uyghurs Policy Brief | ATIP Global Policy Summit

State-Imposed Forced Labor in Xinjiang: Policy Tools to Cut Demand and End Complicity

State-Imposed Forced Labor: Government as Trafficker

State-imposed forced labor is one of the most urgent and insidious forms of human trafficking, where the government itself becomes the trafficker. Unlike private exploitation, it is orchestrated from the top down, integrated into governance, and shielded from accountability.

In the Uyghur Region (officially the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region), the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) operates the world's largest system of state-imposed forced labor. More than 2.5 million Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples are at risk of forced or coerced work (Zenz & Lin, 2024). This system goes beyond exploitation. It enforces cultural erasure, political indoctrination, changes the demographic makeup of the Uyghur region, and communities.

The U.S. Department of State declared China's actions a genocide in 2021, with a dozen countries following suit. The UN OHCHR assessment (2022) documented torture, arbitrary detention, forced sterilization, family separation, and birth suppression, concluding these abuses may constitute crimes against humanity.

The Two Pipelines of Exploitation

Uyghurs are funneled into two interconnected systems of forced labor. The first pipeline exploits detainees held in internment camps, where a minimum of 1.8 million people have been subjected to indoctrination, torture, and abusive labor. In 2019, the Chinese government claimed that the camps are closed, and all the detainees have "graduated." However, a 2025 investigation by The Bureau of Investigative Journalism notes that LG Panda, a joint venture between LG Electronics (South Korea) and Panda Electronics (China), held a recruitment event at one of the internment camps in northern Xinjiang in 2022 to fill more than 100 jobs (Murphy, 2025).

The second pipeline extends beyond the camps into rural communities through labor transfer programs, marketed as "poverty alleviation," but in reality are coercive and compulsory. Between 2001 and 2021, land-use transfers in Xinjiang grew fiftyfold, dispossessing Uyghur farmers and forcing them into wage labor for large agribusinesses (Zenz, 2024). By 2023, Chinese state media reported more than 3 million labor transfers in a single year, illustrating the industrial scale of this trafficking (Zenz, 2024).

Complicit Industries

- Agriculture: Xinjiang produces 14–15% of global tomato paste, nearly two-thirds of paprika oleoresin, and a growing share of stevia (Zenz & Lin, 2024).
- Apparel: Roughly 23% of the world's cotton and 10% of global PVC originate from the Uyghur region, putting a vast share of global clothing and footwear at risk (Uluyol et al., 2023).
- Automotive: More than 100 international automakers and suppliers are tied to Uyghur forced labor through mining, processing, and manufacturing in the region (Murphy et al., 2022).
- Critical Minerals: Uyghur forced labor is embedded in the mining and processing of titanium, lithium, beryllium, and magnesium, with 77 companies tied to 68 global customers (Global Rights Compliance, 2023).

- Solar: Xinjiang supplies 35% of global polysilicon and 32% of metallurgical-grade silicon, exposing most solar panels worldwide (Crawford & Murphy, 2023).

Enforcement of the U.S. Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act

The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA), enacted in 2021 and enforced since 2022, presumes all goods produced wholly or in part in Xinjiang are tainted unless proven otherwise.

- As of August 2025, CBP detained 17,000 shipments worth \$3.7B (CBP, 2025).
- The FLETF Entity List includes 144 companies presumed to rely on forced labor (DHS, 2025; USTR, 2025).
- Enforcement has reshaped supply chains: apparel brands abandoning cotton from the Uyghur region, solar firms building new compliant lines, flooring companies exiting Xinjiang PVC, and tomato paste sourced elsewhere (Murphy & Tate, 2025).
- Companies now trace inputs to raw materials and restructure sourcing, proving that enforcement works (Murphy & Tate, 2025).

The law has been reported to reduce visible abuses (Murphy & Tate, 2025), which many in the diaspora describe as ‘cosmetic changes,’ signaling that the Chinese government is feeling pressure for accountability. Yet due to the lack of an international response, forced labor transfers continue on a massive scale, signalling the need for sustained and coordinated international action to achieve meaningful change for Uyghurs.

Loopholes and Evasion

- Bifurcated supply chains: Some firms create “clean” supply chains for the U.S. market while maintaining Uyghur region-linked sourcing elsewhere (Murphy & Tate, 2025).
- Re-exports: A 2023 KPMG survey found 45% of detained shipments were re-exported to other markets with weaker controls (KPMG, 2023).
- Opaque markets: Rising Xinjiang exports to the EU and UK reveal displacement risks. In August 2025, it was reported that almost £1bn of goods from the Uyghur region had been imported into the UK in the last 12 months (The i Paper, 2025).

Without international coordination and harmonized bans, forced-labor goods simply shift into less regulated markets.

Policy Priorities

U.S. Government

- Expand the Entity List and restore consistent enforcement.
- Fully fund FLETF and civil-society research to support enforcement.
- Deploy Homeland Security Investigations against transshipment schemes and bifurcation.

European Union, United Kingdom, Canada, Mexico, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand

- Adopt rebuttable presumption bans on goods with supply chain risks in the Uyghur region.
- Share enforcement data across borders to block market displacement.

Industry

- Conduct due diligence on the deepest supply chain tiers.
- Abandon sham audits in the Uyghur region, which cannot be credible under state control.
- Divest from the Uyghur Region and from Chinese supply chains that profit from forced labor transfers.

Conclusion

State-imposed forced labor is both a human rights atrocity and a distortion of global markets. Demand-reduction policies, anchored in enforcement, international coordination, and corporate accountability, can make forced labor unprofitable. The Uyghur case is a test. Will the world allow modern slavery to remain embedded in supply chains, or act decisively to end it? The tools exist. The responsibility is shared. The time for action is now.

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Human Trafficking in LATIN AMERICA

Alika Kinan, Argentina
2017 US TIP Hero Award Recipient

Human trafficking is one of the most serious violations of human rights, with a marked gender bias: In South America, 74% of the victims are women and girls, with sexual exploitation being the predominant form (64%), while in Central America and the Caribbean this modality accounts for 81% of cases, especially affecting girls and adolescents (40%) (IDB, 2022). Despite the magnitude of this crime, the region remains underrepresented in international agendas, even though countries such as Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, and Argentina are among the main countries of origin of victims detected in North America and Europe.

In this context, it is necessary to open the debate on legislative measures that directly target demand, the main driving force behind the crime. One of the most relevant proposals is the criminalization of those who purchase sex, following international models (Sweden and France). This measure, accompanied by prevention policies and programs for social and labor reintegration, can help reduce human trafficking for sexual exploitation and provide victims with dignified alternatives.

To make this reform effective, States must: (1) ensure consultation processes with civil society and victims' organizations; (2) strengthen specialized prosecutors' offices and courts on trafficking; (3) accompany legal sanctions with prevention policies, awareness-raising campaigns, and socio-economic inclusion programs; and (4) promote regional cooperation to harmonize regulatory frameworks and coordinate responses.

It is also important to note that, despite legislative advances, the region faces serious limitations in the application of justice; penalties against traffickers and pimps are often light and fail to serve as a deterrent, allowing many to continue exploiting and recruiting victims. Judicial processes are also lengthy and complex, which discourages victims from cooperating, particularly when they lack effective protection measures. This situation is further aggravated by the limited availability of assistance and reintegration services, leaving survivors vulnerable to revictimization. Added to this is the lack of public awareness about human trafficking and the low level of understanding of the devastating impact of this crime on victims, which perpetuates impunity and hinders the development of effective public policies.

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Human Trafficking and Exploitation: Focus on Stopping the Demand for Child Exploitation & Sex Trafficking -A Nigerian Perspective

Author: Dr. Gloria Samdi Puldu (Department of Political Science, University of Jos, Nigeria & President LEAH Foundation).

Executive Summary

Human trafficking and exploitation, particularly involving children and sex trafficking, are urgent priorities in Nigeria, where demand from exploiters sustains these crimes both domestically and transnationally. Nigeria remains a key source, transit, and destination for trafficking, with children often subjected to forced labor, begging, domestic servitude, and sexual exploitation. Despite legal frameworks such as the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act (2015) and the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP)'s initiatives, demand-driven factors like poverty, corruption, and conflict continue to fuel the issue. The Nigerian context, emphasizes prioritizing the cessation of human trafficking and exploitation by addressing demand, incorporating recent case studies from Plateau State and notable Boko Haram/ISWAP and Fulani Militia abductions such as those involving Leah Sharibu, the Chibok girls and many others from the Middle-belt, and proposing enhanced recommendations. These include stricter buyer penalties, awareness campaigns, and global partnerships to dismantle networks and protect vulnerable populations.

Introduction

Prioritizing the stopping of human trafficking and exploitation is essential for safeguarding human rights and achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. Child exploitation and sex trafficking, driven by unrelenting demand, violate international standards outlined by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and exacerbate vulnerabilities among Nigerian youth (UNODC, 2024). In Nigeria, these crimes thrive amid socio-economic challenges, with regions like Plateau State and the northeast (affected by Boko Haram/ISWAP, Fulani Militia) emerging as hotspots due to insecurity and displacement. This brief examines the Nigerian landscape, integrates recent case studies, evaluates ongoing efforts, and recommends demand-focused strategies to inform summit deliberations.

Background on the Issue in Nigeria

Nigeria grapples with one of Africa's highest rates of human trafficking, affecting an estimated 1.6 million in modern slavery, including many children (Walk Free, 2023). Forms of exploitation include forced begging in the almajiri system, domestic servitude, mining labor, and sex trafficking, with girls frequently trafficked to Europe and neighboring countries (IOM, 2023). Demand stems from economic inequality, cultural practices, and conflicts like the Boko Haram/

ISWAP insurgency, where children face recruitment as combatants or sexual slaves (U.S. Department of State, 2024). NAPTIP's 2023 data revealed over 1,194 rescued victims, with 176 girls in sex trafficking cases, underscoring demand's role (U.S. Department of State, 2024).

In conflict zones, terrorist groups like Boko Haram/ISWAP, Fulani Militia exacerbate trafficking by abducting girls from schools and communities, subjecting them to forced marriages, sexual slavery, and exploitation to meet the demand for "wives" or laborers within their ranks. These abductions highlight how armed groups create and sustain demand for child exploitation, often selling or trading victims.

Recent Case Studies from Plateau State

To illustrate the urgency of prioritizing anti-trafficking efforts, recent cases from Plateau State highlight demand-driven exploitation of girls and children:

In January 2025, the Plateau State Gender and Equal Opportunities Commission rescued 100 victims of human trafficking, many of whom were girls subjected to sexual exploitation and forced labor. Commission Chair Olivia Dazyem noted that victims were lured with false job promises amid economic hardship, emphasizing the need for demand-side interventions (Dazyem, 2025).

Another case involved the arrest of a prominent pastor in Plateau State in early 2025, leading to the rescue of 13 children, including girls trafficked for exploitation. The syndicate operated under the guise of religious activities, selling children to buyers for labor and sexual purposes, revealing how demand infiltrates trusted institutions (Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project [OCCRP], 2025a).

In January 2025, authorities arrested a trafficker and rescued Lagos-bound minors from Plateau, who were destined for sexual exploitation and domestic servitude. The Plateau State Joint Task Force tracked the operation, highlighting transnational demand networks (Punch Newspapers, 2025a).

Additionally, in September 2024, Plateau State received 39 trafficked children rescued from Abuja, many girls exploited in begging and labor rings. This case underscores the flow of victims from conflict zones like Plateau to urban centers (Africa Independent Television, 2024).

These examples demonstrate how demand perpetuates cycles of abuse, necessitating prioritized action.

Notable Cases Involving Boko Haram/ISWAP Abductions

Boko Haram/ISWAP's abductions represent a stark manifestation of demand for child exploitation and sex trafficking, where girls are kidnapped from schools and communities,

trafficked within insurgent networks, and sold or forced into sexual slavery. These cases underscore the intersection of terrorism and trafficking, with victims often held for years to satisfy the group's demand for "brides" or servants (Amnesty International, 2024 & 2025).

The 2014 Chibok schoolgirls abduction remains emblematic: On April 14, 2014, Boko Haram kidnapped 276 girls from the Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok, Borno State. Many were trafficked into forced marriages and sexual slavery, with some sold to fighters or used as suicide bombers. As of 2025, approximately 82 girls remain in captivity, despite rescues over the years. The Nigerian government continues efforts to secure their release, but waning international attention and ongoing insecurity hinder progress (U.S. Department of State, 2024; Vanguard, 2025). Survivors have reported systematic rape and exploitation, highlighting the demand-driven nature of these crimes (Human Rights Watch, 2024).

Another prominent case is that of Leah Sharibu, abducted on February 19, 2018, along with 109 other girls from the Government Girls Science and Technical College in Dapchi, Yobe State, by the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), a Boko Haram faction. While most were released, Leah, then 14, remains in captivity as of September 2025 for refusing to renounce her Christian faith. Reports indicate she has been subjected to sexual slavery, forced labor and forced conversion, with Boko Haram/ISWAP using her as a "slave" and demanding ransom or prisoner exchanges. In May 2025, on her 22nd birthday, advocacy groups such as the LEAH Foundation (www.leah-foundation.org) renewed calls for her release, noting government commitments but limited action (Open Doors UK, 2025; Punch Newspapers, 2025b.). Leah's case exemplifies how ideological demands fuel prolonged exploitation.

Recent reports also detail ongoing abductions: In 2024-2025, Amnesty International documented girls escaping Boko /ISWAP only to face neglect or detention by authorities, with many trafficked for sexual purposes during captivity (Amnesty International, 2025). These cases illustrate the persistent demand within terrorist networks and the need for targeted interventions to disrupt such exploitation.

Current Policies and Efforts

Anchored by the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act (2015), Nigeria's framework criminalizes trafficking with severe penalties and empowers NAPTIP (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2015). The National Action Plan on Human Trafficking (2022-2026) prioritizes prevention, including demand reduction via education and victim support (UNODC, 2022). NAPTIP maintains shelters as well as collaborates with NGOs with shelters to support its effort, maintains a hotline, and ensures international collaborations for repatriation (NAPTIP, n.d.). In 2023, 48 traffickers were prosecuted, 24 convicted, and over 17,000 labor

inspections conducted (U.S. Department of State, 2024). Demand-targeting includes media campaigns in high-risk areas like Plateau and the northeast.

Challenges

Enforcement gaps persist, with corruption enabling complicity in IDP camps (U.S. Department of State, 2024). Resource shortages limit NAPTIP's capacity, with only 14 shelters and inadequate reintegration funding and limited NGO funding, risking revictimization (Sawadogo & Ojo, 2022). In regions affected by Boko Haram, ISWAP, Fulani Militia, insecurity hampers rescues, while cultural norms tolerate child labor (Adeyemi & Adeyemi, 2024). Weak prosecutions of buyers and terrorist exploiters exacerbate demand.

Recommendations

To prioritize stopping human trafficking and exploitation by curbing demand:

1. Enhance Legal Measures Against Demand by strengthening penalties for buyers, mandating sentences for exploiting minors, and train officials on demand investigations, inspired by U.S. models (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2020). Extend this to terrorist-related trafficking.
2. Prioritize rescue of victims like Leah Sharibu, remaining Chibok girls and all other victims still in captivity and enslavement.
3. Intensify Awareness Campaigns by rolling out targeted education across Nigeria but urgently in states like Plateau, Edo and Borno, warning exploiters of consequences and integrating anti-trafficking into curricula with UNICEF support (UNICEF, 2023).
4. Bolster Victim Protection by expanding NAPTIP funding for trauma-informed reintegration, prioritizing survivors of Boko Haram/ISWAP and Fulani Militia abductions (OSCE, 2022).
5. Strengthen International Cooperation by partnering with summit nations for cross-border operations, sharing intelligence on Boko Haram/ISWAP networks (IOM, 2023).
6. Regulate Vulnerable Sectors by increasing inspections in almajiri schools, mining sites, and conflict zones, rescuing children from exploitation (U.S. Department of State, 2024).

Conclusion

Prioritizing the halt of human trafficking and exploitation in Nigeria requires a demand-focused approach, informed by cases like those in Plateau State and Boko Haram abductions. Through enforcement, education, and collaboration, Nigeria can reduce vulnerabilities and advance global

anti-trafficking aims. Governments and this Summit participants should commit resources to these priorities for lasting impact.

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Impact Statement: Human Trafficking Youth Prevention Education (HTYPE) Demonstration Program

The Need

Human trafficking and child sexual abuse remain urgent public health and safety issues in the United States. Trafficking is not confined to one geography or demographic—it occurs in both rural and urban settings, in wealthy suburbs and in underserved communities. The federal **Human Trafficking Youth Prevention Education (HTYPE) Demonstration Program** was established to address this need by equipping schools nationwide with the tools, training, and resources to prevent exploitation before it occurs.

The Value of HTYPE

HTYPE is the first federally funded initiative dedicated specifically to prevention education in schools. Since 2020, **nine HTYPE partnerships** have implemented the **PROTECT program**, a survivor-informed, trauma-responsive model aligned with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) characteristics of effective health education.

The HTYPE demonstration mirrors the **3Strands Global Foundation evidence-based PROTECT framework**:

1. **Establish a Human Trafficking School Safety Protocol** – Ensure clear reporting procedures and mandated response pathways.
2. **Train school staff to recognize and report child trafficking** – Build educator knowledge of trafficking indicators, grooming strategies, and risk/protective factors.
3. **Equip educators with instructional materials to teach students effectively** – Deliver age-appropriate, adaptable lessons that build awareness, strengthen protective factors, and practice boundary-setting and communication skills.
4. **Measure the impact** – Use pre-/post-assessments, focus groups, and fidelity monitoring to evaluate outcomes.



5. **Scale the program through train-the-trainer certification** – Certify facilitators through the PROTECT Facilitator Academy to expand reach and ensure fidelity to the vetted model.

By combining these components, HTYPE creates long-term prevention infrastructure, ensuring that education and training are embedded within schools themselves rather than dependent on one-time outside presentations.

The Impact

Through HTYPE, PROTECT has reached extremely rural regions such as El Paso, Texas and Fremont, Nebraska, as well as large urban districts like Los Angeles Unified and San Diego Unified. Across these diverse contexts, the program has proven both scalable and adaptable, meeting local needs while maintaining fidelity to established best practices.

Examples of impact include:

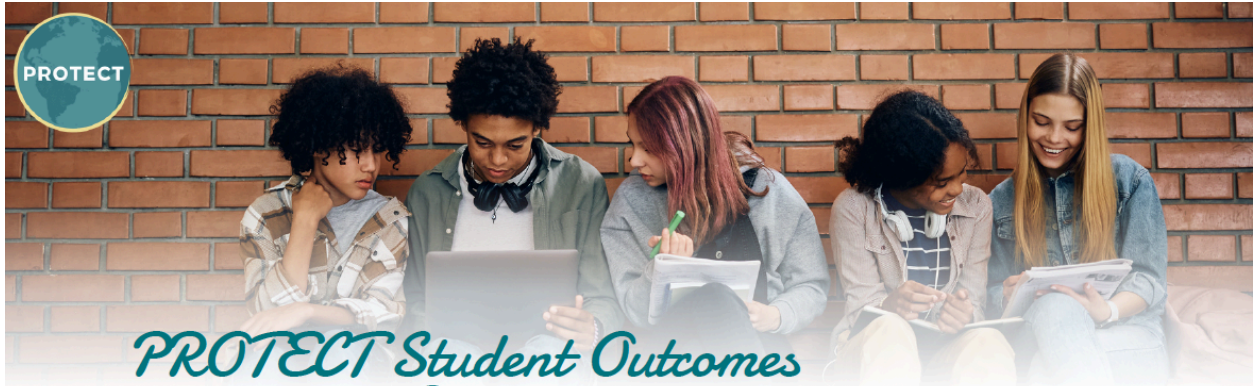
- **Students** learn to recall definitions of abuse, recognize unsafe situations, analyze grooming strategies, construct and verbalize personal boundaries, write safety plans, and practice communication and decision-making skills that reduce risk.
- **School staff** are trained to recognize red flags, apply trauma-informed approaches, respond to disclosures appropriately, and fulfill mandatory reporting obligations with cultural and linguistic responsiveness.
- **Certified facilitators** master prevention curriculum, apply adult learning strategies, practice facilitation, and sustain program fidelity as local leaders who multiply impact.

In total, the nine 3Strands Global Foundation HTYPE partnerships have already trained 135,000 staff, certified hundreds of facilitators, and engaged tens of thousands of students and parents/guardians. (See impact examples and pages attached.) Beyond numbers, the program has generated needed conversations about safety and connection in classrooms and communities where such dialogue had long been missing.

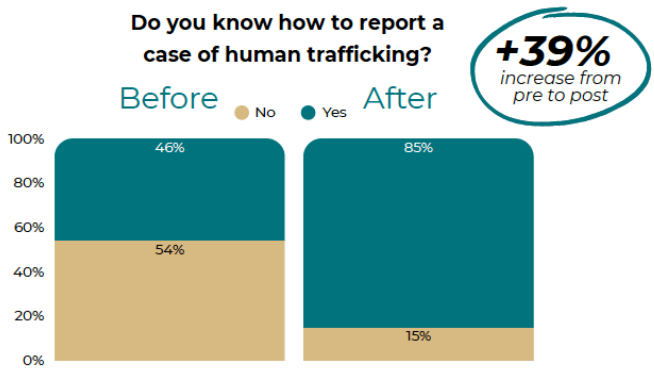


Why It Matters

Without the HTYPE Demonstration Program, schools would lose one of the only federally funded tools designed to prevent trafficking before it occurs. The absence of HTYPE would mean fewer trained educators to recognize red flags, fewer students able to identify unsafe situations, and fewer families connected to resources. The result is not abstract—it is children remaining unseen, unprotected, and at greater risk of exploitation.

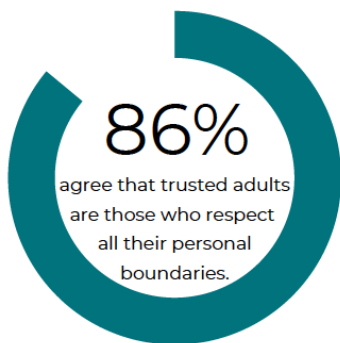


PROTECT Student Outcomes 2024 - 2025 Q4

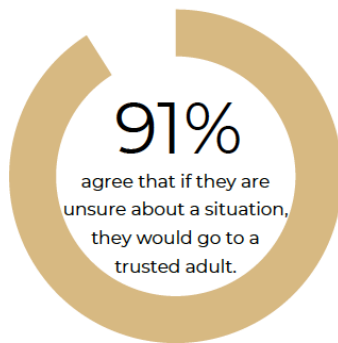


After completing the PROTECT curriculum, **98% OF STUDENTS** recognize that human trafficking is when someone uses *force, fraud, or coercion* to take advantage of another person for labor or sex.

After completing PROTECT,



Healthy relationships



Safe people



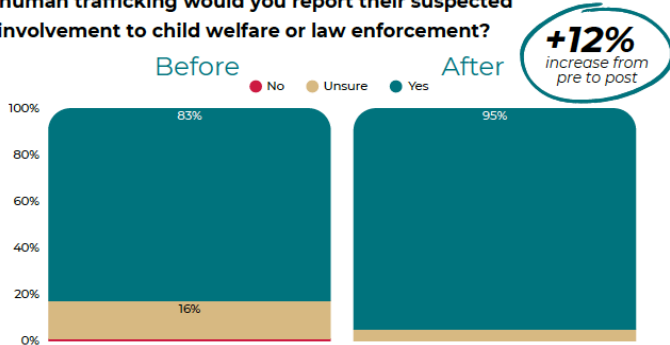
Trusted adults

In Q4 of the 2024-2025 school year, PROTECT has educated **over 8,800 students** from **65 districts** across **8 states**. PROTECT has been implemented in over **370 school districts** and **12 states** since 2014. Within that time, **over 838,000 students** have been educated.



PROTECT Staff Outcomes 2024 - 2025 Q4

If you are uncertain about whether a minor is involved in human trafficking would you report their suspected involvement to child welfare or law enforcement?

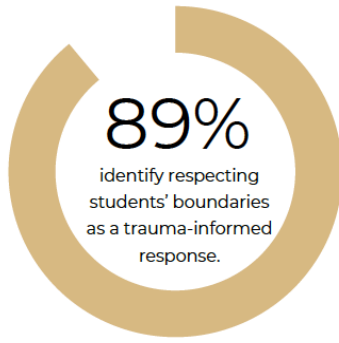


After completing the PROTECT training, **95% OF STAFF** are confident in the steps required to *report a case of human trafficking*.

After completing PROTECT,



When to intervene



Trauma-informed practices



Where to refer students

In Q4 of the 2024-2025 school year, PROTECT has trained **over 380 educators** from **27 districts** across **6 states**. PROTECT has been implemented in over **370 school districts** and **12 states** since 2014. Within that time, **over 134,000 educators** have been trained.



Impact Statement: The Trafficking Survivors Relief Act and The GRACIE Act

United States House of Representatives
Committee on the Judiciary Subcommittee on
Crime and Federal Government Surveillance

Written Hearing Testimony

**By 3Strands Global Foundation CEO, Ashlie Bryant and Survivor Advisory Board
Member and Policy Consultant, Hollie Nadel**

February 27, 2025

Dear Chairman Biggs and Ranking Member McBath:

My name is Ashlie Bryant, and I am the CEO of 3Strands Global Foundation, an organization dedicated to preventing human trafficking and supporting survivors through education, employment, and reintegration programs. I write to express my strong support for the GRACIE Act and the Trafficking Survivor Relief Act, two critical bills that will protect vulnerable children and provide relief for trafficking survivors.

Human trafficking is a national crisis, and children in the foster care system are among the most vulnerable. Of the 390,000 children in foster care, 60% of child sex trafficking victims have a history of foster care involvement, and one in three foster youth who run away are approached by a trafficker within 48 hours. These numbers underscore the urgent need for reforms to prevent exploitation.

At 3Strands Global Foundation, we have seen firsthand how instability, multiple placements, and lack of trusted adults put system-involved youth at heightened risk. We operate a drop in center for at risk youth at the intersection of foster care and human trafficking in California, and our programs have educated 1.13 million



students, teachers, and community members and provided employment and reintegration support to over 1,000 survivors.

The GRACIE Act, introduced by Senators Blackburn and Ossoff, would require recording CPS interviews with children and adults, ensuring critical documentation is available for investigations. In my 15 years of working alongside survivors, I have met many whose cries for help were lost in an overburdened system. Properly recorded interviews will:

- Improve victim identification through reliable documentation.
- Reduce retraumatization by limiting repeated interviews.
- Strengthen evidence collection to hold traffickers accountable.

We must ensure vulnerable children are not overlooked due to poor documentation or agency miscommunication.

Additionally, survivors of human trafficking often face lasting consequences due to criminal records tied to their exploitation. The Trafficking Survivor Relief Act allows survivors to clear non-violent convictions resulting from their trafficking, removing barriers to employment, housing, and education.

Through my work, I have met thousands of survivors who, despite escaping their traffickers, remain punished by records that should never define their futures. This bill will allow them to rebuild their lives with dignity and stability.

As a longtime advocate, I have seen how policy change can transform lives. The GRACIE Act will help protect children from trafficking, while the Trafficking Survivor Relief Act will provide justice for survivors. I urge Congress to take action now—so no more children fall through the cracks, and no more survivors remain burdened by a past that was never their choice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Ashlie M. Bryant'.

Ashlie Bryant

CEO, 3Strands Global Foundation



February 27, 2025

Dear Chairman Biggs and Ranking Member McBath:

I write to you today as a Human Resources and Operations Specialist, a business owner, a certified Anti- Money Laundering Specialist, a lived experience expert on PTSD and trauma, a policy consultant on Anti-Trafficking legislation, a human rights advocate, an artist, a daughter, as sister, a friend, a leader, and truly so much more. But lastly, I want to highlight that I am a survivor of Human Trafficking who was federally criminalized as a result of my trafficking victimization. I say it last because it is something that happened to me, but it does not define me. It is not my identity. Nothing will ever make what happened acceptable, but as a result I am a survivor through and through. I am the strongest version of myself that I have ever been, and I choose to get up every single day and fight with everything I have to make this world a better place. To make it that our children and our children's children grow up in a better world. To make it that other survivors won't have to go through what we went through.

I want to clarify some common misconceptions. There is no black and white survivor story. There are all types of trafficking in this world. I am grateful to say that I did not grow up in a broken home. I was not an at-risk youth. I was an honor student. I received a talent and academic scholarship to go to Ithaca College to pursue a career in Costume Design. I graduated Cum Laude with a BFA in Theatre Production Design and began a successful career in television, film, and theatre. My moral compass was always straight. If anything, I was a goody two shoes. The closest I ever came to a crime was one time accidentally walking out with a water bottle that I had opened since I was thirsty while shopping at CVS- as soon as I realized, I went back immediately, and paid for it. However, none of this matters because none of that stopped me like so many others from being vulnerable. In my early twenties, I was laid off from my job. It also coincided with heartbreak after a relationship ended. I was a perfectionist. I was so hard on myself. I felt like a failure. I was ashamed. I didn't want to ask for help. I went into a depression. And that is when I met my traffickers. I was a prime target for them. And they were patient. It was a long grooming process. A process whereby they learned my vulnerabilities in order to exploit them. They gained my trust, they built up my confidence- they helped me start working again in my chosen profession. Just when I felt that my life was getting better, they went to the next phase. The take down.



This turned into eight years of abuse - abuse that a judge called akin to torture - involved involuntary domestic servitude, labor trafficking, sex trafficking and finally, forced marriage. I was under constant threat and fear for my life and for the safety of my loved ones. I was made to live out of suitcases, and was isolated from those who could help me. I took actions under extreme duress to survive. I received no profit from the crimes of my traffickers, only suffering. And yet today, along with so many other survivors, I pay the price for my traffickers' crimes. Many survivors during their trafficking victimization may experience "forced criminality," in which traffickers coerce their victims into committing crimes to profit the traffickers. As a result, trafficking victims may face unjust prosecution and punishment for their traffickers' crimes.

I did not benefit from any of this. Every penny that I "earned" at the direction of my traffickers was passed directly to them. For years, I lived out of a suitcase and I was rendered completely dependent on the traffickers. I was tortured. Yet, I was prosecuted. I had to resign from a job that I had only stellar performance reviews from when my unjust conviction for bank fraud and money laundering was finalized. I have to work so much harder now to earn a living due to my unjust criminalization. This is often what leads to survivors being revictimized. Despite this, I am continuing to rebuild my life in ways within my control to do so.

During this time since my sentencing in September of 2024, I have continued my work that I have been doing over the last 7 years within this sector. Some of these highlights include the following:

- I started my own Human Resources and Recruiting firm. I also use this expertise to mentor and coach survivors to help them gain better employment and tackle the hurdles that we have to face.
- As a Certified Anti-Money Laundering specialist, I work with financial institutions nationwide to educate on the realities of Human Trafficking and how they can identify trafficking through the financial footprint and properly escalate to the authorities.
- I provided survivor support to financial institutions for the Survivor Inclusion Initiative.
- I worked on and testified on The Debt Bondage Repair Act and the Trafficking Survivors Relief Act. I am continuing to educate on these two pieces of legislation.
- I have been a featured speaker at ACAMS AML Symposiums, NGA's Criminal Justice Policy Advisor's briefing on Human Trafficking, and The Virginia Attorney General's Annual Human Trafficking Summit, HHS



- I was awarded the Pembroke Fellowship at the Human Trafficking Legal Center to help with Survivor Leadership Programs
- I am Secretary for the Survivor Advisory Board and a policy consultant.

I am determined to use my lived experience from these horrific years to bring meaningful change and protect others from human traffickers, and if I can't stop it from happening before, then I can at least help to provide a solution. It is important that there is recourse in place for victims who have been unjustly prosecuted. I urge you to please help pass this legislation to provide a vehicle for expungement for victims of trafficking like myself and so many others. The passage of this federal bill would merely bring federal procedure into alignment with state procedure which already provides for this relief for state criminal convictions. This will provide salvation for myself and so many others. Without it, I don't know what the future holds. The Trafficking Survivors Relief Act will provide recourse to right this injustice that I and so many survivors face. It will help to restore faith in a system that is meant to protect, rather than punish us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Hollie Nadel'.

Hollie Nadel

Lucy Bloom

Director of Impact Strategies, Altus Solutions, Inc.

Survivor Leader

Supporting the Engage Together Project &

National Human Trafficking Database Act

Dear Survivor Leaders, Esteemed members of Congress, and other friends in this room,

It has been 14,159 days since I made the determination that a life of sexual exploitation would not be my tomorrow, ending 8 years of CSEC.

After studying psychology, serving at risk youth for 14 years and building programs for incarcerated and disconnected fathers for 7 years, it wasn't until I was assisting in writing a screening tool for youth picked up by law enforcement for the purpose of documenting human trafficking that the dots connected and I realized that I too was a survivor of human trafficking. See, my groomer was a beloved national Christian leader, and my next two controllers were the nephew of a deacon at my church and then my cousin, and my buyers were people my controllers called "friend". I had believed all that time that my undoing was my own fault.

As I've watched this movement over the last 25 years, I've often heard - we cannot address demand because it will never go away. As I've studied the history of the abolition movement dating back to the 1680s, I've seen a pattern with each earnest wave of recognizing demand as a root cause of human trafficking.

At Engage Together, what we have seen effective is when equal efforts for prevention, identification, exit, restoration and reform (including anti-demand efforts) work in full collaboration, as we are endeavoring to do here today. On the surface, it appears that our data analysis of risk and response at the county level that inspired the National Human Trafficking Database Act. Foundational to the gathering of that data is identifying real, today solutions to the challenges, and the challenge of reform and addressing demand is one we stand with you on.

One reform I propose we consider is our federal definition of human trafficking. There are means of human trafficking found in the Palermo Protocol that are not included in our federal definition: the abuse of power or vulnerability and giving payment or benefits. This omission has made our definition too broad to effectively address demand. Instead, what

we have seen is that the demand has been protected, accountability of demand prevented, and survivors are further harmed by efforts towards prosecution.

High profile persons continually assert that because of the "good" they do (for the economy, for their religion, for entertainment, for our country..) for their power, position, fame or wealth they are excused from the exploitation they have found a way to cover up. United, we must continue to take a collective stand with survivors to bring the truth of demand into the light.

I am proud of the efforts of survivor leaders, especially those here in the room today and those who have stood in the gap since 2000 with this unpopular message that demand is a root cause of human trafficking and must be addressed in order for human trafficking to be eradicated.

Anne, I especially thank you for holding this roundtable, and I commit to you and all here that I will do my very best to play my role in this effort.



Official Statement on Survivor Inclusion and the Trafficking Survivor Relief Act

To Whom It May Concern,

As a **human trafficking survivor**, I know firsthand the importance of being heard, protected, and included in every conversation and policy that directly affects us. Our lived experience is not only valuable but essential in shaping solutions that truly address the realities of trafficking. Survivors carry the expertise of survival itself, the insight into how grooming occurs, how exploitation is sustained, and how recovery can be achieved.

For too long, survivors have endured endless physical and emotional abuse, forced into acts they never imagined themselves doing, often under the constant threat of losing their lives. These individuals should not be further punished or silenced by the systems meant to protect them. Instead, they must be given relief, dignity, and the opportunity to heal.

The **Trafficking Survivor Relief Act** is a vital step forward. This legislation recognizes the truth of what survivors have endured and provides meaningful relief for those who were forced into impossible choices while trapped in exploitation. It acknowledges the coercion and fear that shaped their actions and offers a pathway to restoration rather than continued retraumatization.

Pearl at the Mailbox calls upon lawmakers, community leaders, and the public to stand with survivors by passing the Trafficking Survivor Relief Act. This is not only a matter of justice but of humanity. Survivors must be deferred to for their lived expertise, protected from further harm, and included as leaders in the fight to end human trafficking.

Respectfully,

Sheri Lopez

Human Trafficking Survivor

Founder, *Pearl at the Mailbox*

President, Arizona Human Trafficking Survivor Coalition

Founder, National Grooming Prevention Hotline

Written Comments on the Dangers of Demand and Full Decriminalization

Anti-Trafficking Policy Roundtable

September 18, 2025

On behalf of Shared Hope International (“Shared Hope”), thank you for the opportunity to submit written comments on the urgent need to address demand in the commercial sex trade and to oppose proposals for the full decriminalization of prostitution. Shared Hope is a non-profit organization dedicated to preventing, restoring, and bringing justice to survivors of child and youth sex trafficking. For 25 years, we have worked across the country and throughout the globe to guide and support appropriate responses to protect survivors, hold offenders to account, and ultimately prevent the crime entirely.

Our organization works every day with survivors of human trafficking, and their experiences remind us of a simple truth: a system that permits the buying and selling of human beings can never be safe, dignified, or just.

Demand as a Driving Force of Trafficking

Demand for commercial sex is one of the most significant drivers of human trafficking. Yet, despite court precedent¹ and the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act (JVTA)² codifying unambiguously that sex buyers are committing trafficking offenses, it remains the least enforced aspect. Failure to address demand creates dangerous blind spots, leading to misidentification of victims, including children exploited by buyers without trafficker involvement, individuals too afraid or unable to identify their trafficker, or those who do not yet recognize their own exploitation.

A strong federal response must target all sex trafficking offenders, including sex buyers, while at the same time ensuring survivors are identified, supported, and afforded justice.

The Dangers of Full Decriminalization

Proposals to fully decriminalize prostitution—removing criminal liability not only for those exploited but also for sex buyers and profiteers—directly conflict with longstanding federal policy. For decades, administrations of both parties have affirmed that prostitution is inherently harmful and incompatible with efforts to eradicate trafficking.

Full decriminalization ignores the systemic violence, coercion, and inequality embedded in the commercial sex industry. Research demonstrates the grave harms: in nine countries studied, 78% of prostituted women and girls reported rape, 53% endured sexual torture, and nearly half were kidnapped and transported across state lines.³ Communities that have legalized or decriminalized prostitution consistently experience increases in sex trafficking.⁴

¹ See *United States v. Jungers*, 702 F.3d 1066, holding that buyers of commercial sex with children are traffickers

² See 114 P.L. 22, 129 Stat. 227, 2015 Enacted S. 178, 114 Enacted S. 178. The JVTA amended the federal trafficking law, 18 U.S.C. § 1591, by adding the terms “patronize” and “solicit” to the list of prohibited conduct and clarified that the change was meant to “mak[e] absolutely clear for judges, juries, prosecutors, and law enforcement officials that criminals who purchase sexual acts from human trafficking victims may be arrested, prosecuted, and convicted as sex trafficking offenders”

³ Judd et al., “What are the Costs when Teens are Prostituted?” (2023), https://evidence2impact.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/s_mifis06c05.pdf.

⁴ *Id.*

Decriminalizing demand normalizes exploitation and fuels growth of the sex trade. Men who otherwise would not purchase sex when it is illegal become new clients, creating increased demand that inevitably draws in more vulnerable individuals—especially children and youth, who are the most in demand.

A Survivor-Centered Alternative: The Survivor Model

The path forward is not full decriminalization, but the adoption of a survivor-centered framework often referred to as the Survivor Model (formerly the Equality Model). Under this approach:

- Individuals who are trafficked or prostituted are not criminalized, but instead recognized as victims entitled to dignity, protection, and comprehensive services.
- Sex buyers and profiteers are held criminally accountable.
- Survivors are provided with trauma-informed care and long-term support to rebuild their lives.

This model is widely regarded by anti-trafficking advocates as best practice. It reflects the logic of Safe Harbor laws for children, which protect victims from prosecution while holding exploiters accountable. These protections reduce revictimization, mitigate vulnerabilities, and improve long-term outcomes for survivors.

Alignment with Federal Policy and Precedent

U.S. policy has consistently recognized the harms of prostitution and the central role of demand in fueling trafficking:

- **National Security Presidential Directive-22 (2002)**⁵ established an abolitionist approach, explicitly opposing prostitution as dehumanizing and inherently harmful.
- **The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (2003 amendment)** required grantees to adopt an anti-prostitution pledge.⁶
- **The Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act (2016)** made clear that buyers can and must be prosecuted as sex trafficking offenders.
- **Executive Orders**⁷ and **President’s Public-Private Partnership Advisory Council (PPPAC)**⁸ **recommendations** under successive administrations have reinforced the need for a coordinated, survivor-centered approach that addresses demand.

This bipartisan history affirms that U.S. leadership on trafficking is incompatible with policies that legitimize prostitution.

⁵ See National Security Directive 22, “Combatting Trafficking in Persons,” December 16, 2002, <https://irp.fas.org/offdocs/nspd/nspd-22.pdf>.

⁶ See *supra* note 2. “No funds . . . may be used to promote, support, or advocate the legalization or practice of prostitution” and that “No funds . . . may be used to implement any program . . . through any organization that has not stated in either a grant application, a grant agreement, or both, that it does not promote, support, or advocate the legalization or practice of prostitution.”

⁷ See Exec. Order No. 13903 (2020) (President Trump). Reaffirmed the U.S. government’s commitment to eradicating trafficking, emphasized need for “a comprehensive and coordinated response” to trafficking, and affirmed executive branch’s commitment to “prioritize its resources to vigorously prosecute offenders, to assist victims, and to provide prevention education to combat human trafficking and online sexual exploitation of children.”

⁸ See Public-Private Partnership Advisory Council to End Human Trafficking, 2020 Annual Report, (2020), <https://2021-2025.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/public-private-partnership-advisory-council-to-end-human-trafficking-2020-annual-report.pdf>.

Recommended Actions

To advance a comprehensive federal response, we urge the following:

1. Prosecute Sex Buyers

- Enforce existing federal laws against those who purchase sex from trafficking victims.
- Train federal law enforcement and prosecutors to prioritize demand in investigations and prosecutions.
- Ensure buyers are a focus of national sting operations, particularly when minors are involved.

2. Oppose Full Decriminalization

- Reaffirm that prostitution is inherently exploitative and not a form of legitimate employment.
- Reject proposals to remove criminal liability for sex buyers or profiteers.
- Prohibit federal funding for organizations that promote full decriminalization.

3. Support and Protect Survivors

- Ensure trafficked individuals are treated as victims, not criminals.
- Expand trauma-informed, survivor-centered training for federal personnel.
- Incentivize states to adopt laws and practices that prevent survivor criminalization and expand access to vacatur, post-conviction relief, and comprehensive services.

Conclusion

The United States has long recognized prostitution as harmful and intrinsically linked to trafficking. We must remain steadfast in rejecting efforts to normalize or legitimize the sex trade and instead strengthen our commitment to survivor-centered solutions. By targeting demand, protecting survivors, and reaffirming an abolitionist approach, we can take meaningful steps toward ending human trafficking in our country.

Respectfully submitted,



Linda Smith
Founder and President

Making the Case for Honor-based Violence¹ Prevention Act

How Preventing Violence Against New American² (VANA) Households Benefits America

We assess a federal legislation which enacts a legal framework to tackle Honor-based Violence will empower the first responder community throughout the United States by preventing Violence Against New Americans (VANA). We further assess New American communities likely will be empowered to report on Honor-based crimes occurring to them, or within their own communities as a result of the passage of this law.

- Crimes occurring to New Americans are taking place in a cultural context called honor-based violence and are yet to be recognized in any state or federal statutory framework, making these injustices extremely difficult to report to law enforcement and social services. Additionally, law enforcement has an equally difficult time documenting these injustices.
- Federal legislation is desperately needed to add honor-based violence and its sub-categories to counter Violence Against New Americans (VANA).
- According to the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), most glaringly absent from the list of forms of human trafficking in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) is forced marriage – a sub-category of honor-based abuse and violence that occurs in New American communities. As a result, survivors of forced marriage trafficking cannot access the services and justice that other survivors of the defined forms of trafficking are able to access.

We further assess a federal legislation should also embolden quality honor-based violence training, and community outreach training for first responders, social service providers, and education providers, and bolster a Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM) education framework for New American children whose merit is too often ignored in the education system due to experiencing honor-based violence in households.

This federal legislation will tackle multiple issues that occur in New American communities that eventually will lead to New Americans and their future generations who reside here to prosper and contribute to the growth and continued success of America.

Please contact the author of this legislative framework if you have any questions:

Sasha Taylor | Executive Director | SK Sultana | sasha@realityofadesigirl.com | 480-862-0004 | <https://www.sksultana.com/>

¹ Honor-based Violence and its sub-practice include any crime or incident committed to protect or defend the "honor" of a family or community. It is often perpetrated against individuals who are perceived to have breached their family's code of behavior, bringing shame or dishonor upon them.

² New Americans are refugees and immigrants and their children legally residing in the United States.

Impact Statement
By: Delia Vega
A Survivor of Sexual Exploitation

I am a survivor of sexual exploitation. I share this statement not to shock or seek sympathy, but to convey the depth of harm I have endured—and to highlight the urgent need for legislation that targets the root cause of this crisis: demand.

The trauma I live with is lifelong. Like many survivors, I struggle with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. For me, PTSD means flashbacks, fear around intimacy, hypervigilance, mistrust, and an ongoing battle to feel safe in my own skin. These symptoms affect every part of my life, relationships, health, work, and wellbeing.

The physical toll is just as real. Bodies exploited for commercial sex face constant harm. Survivors live with untreated injuries, chronic pain, and long-term medical conditions that can last for decades. But the damage didn't stop there. After escaping exploitation, I was met not with care, but with judgment. By family, by institutions, and even by the systems meant to protect me. I was treated not as a victim, but as a criminal. This is the reality for far too many survivors, especially those exploited as children.

As a survivor, I now work with young people who have been exploited. I also work with young people in our policy work, which is directly informed by their experiences and voices. I see firsthand how trauma impacts their lives. I see how systems often fail to respond with compassion or accountability. I see how stigma and criminalization keep them from healing. And I know, both from my own experience and theirs, that meaningful change is only possible through strong, survivor-informed legislation.

That's why public policy matters. The sex trade is fueled by buyers. When men stop buying sex, traffickers lose their incentive. Anti-demand legislation works. It reduces exploitation, holds buyers accountable, and begins to shift the culture that enables this abuse. When laws recognize survivors as victims, not criminals, healing becomes possible. When exploiters face consequences, they lose power.

We must especially focus on protecting children. Children exploited in the sex trade cannot consent. They are not criminals. They are victims in need of safety, services, and justice. Legislation must reflect this truth, especially for our children and their safety.

We need survivor-informed policies crafted with input from those of us who have lived this experience. Our stories are not just tragic they are vital sources of insight. We know what failed us. We know what could have saved us. And we know what is still needed today. If we want to end sexual exploitation, we must: End the demand, Support survivor healing, Stop the criminalization of victims and Protect our most vulnerable, our children.

Thank you,
Delia Vega
My Life My Choice -Senior Survivor Mentor/Policy Manager

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Gisela Castro Medina, and I was federally indicted on multiple counts of sex trafficking when I was 19 years old. When I was arrested, I was not privy to federal law or what it meant to be charged with multiple felonies; I was also not aware that I too was a victim in my case.

For context on my specific case, I was in high school when I committed my crime. COVID-19 had just provoked a quarantine and the high school I was attending as well as other schools throughout the nation had no idea on the proper way to deal with it and its consequences. My school was shut down and everything was moved online with little to no direction regarding curriculum. At this point, my then best friend and I took advantage of the situation and decided it would be a good idea to blow off school and just have fun as we had no current responsibilities.

When she arrived at my house, she mentioned to me that there was a website in which girls would talk to old men and in return they would receive money for it. She explained that a friend of hers introduced her to the website. During this point of my life, I was insecure and extremely sheltered yet I wanted to be perceived as a cool girl who did not care and was participating in risky activities. She told me that she could make my profile and that it would not be a big deal. As soon as the profiles were created, she began selling nudes to older men and I mainly used the website to entertain strange conversation with strangers.

A couple of days went by, and my brother came into my room in a drunken rage and threw a heavy ceramic object at me and began to pick a fight with me. My friend was next to me, and I was in tears. She did not know that this was a common occurrence, and she also did not know that my parents treated me in a similar way at that point. My childhood was flooded with abuse and neglect, yet I bottled it all up due to the fear of not being understood. I figured all the people at my school had perfect families and that if I disclosed the reality of what was happening at home I would be perceived as a freak.

In any event, I felt the urge to vent to someone, to finally break my silence. I went back to the website, and I began messaging a stranger, and I disclosed everything. What I received in return from this man was nothing but kindness and compassion, something that I had never experienced before. I was so surprised, and it made me feel good. The conversation later moved off the website and he began messaging me on my personal number. We exchanged socials as well.

After constant messaging back and forth, he invited me to his place in Downtown Minneapolis. I told him that I would go but that I was with my friend and that it would be uncouth if I just left her alone. He told me to bring her along. I mentioned that she was only 16 years old. He told me that it was no big deal. Again, I was surprised and excited. I figured he was not only trustworthy but also a very understanding and good person.

When we arrived at his luxury condo, his walls were framed with pictures of him posing with the current president and other celebrities, this in combination with his extreme wealth gave him so much credibility from my point of view. When I was younger, I believed that actual wealth was acquired in legal ways and that wealthy people did not do harmful things towards people. I thought “bad” people resembled what was portrayed stereotypically in the movies.

After we arrived, he got both my friend and I incredibly intoxicated. The prosecutors believe that we were both drugged that night, yet they could not prove it in court. He was sober. We had sex yet I don’t remember the exact details from that night and the other nights that we both visited him. He gave us money and gifts after we engaged in sex with him. At the end of one of the meetings, he mentioned that I become his recruiter. I said no and I mentioned that I am not motivated by money or to engage in such behavior.

Despite some concerns, I kept seeing him. Our relationship morphed into a brother sister like bond. He would listen to me, yet he would not disclose anything about himself. Over time, he convinced me to recruit from him. He said it was legal in the state of Minnesota to have consensual sex with people that are age 16 and older. I believed him. In that moment, I did not believe that he could ever be lying to me due to his impressive credentials.

In retrospect, that time of my life was the worst time of my entire life. I went from being a straight A student to failing my last semester of high school. I became an alcoholic and an addict, I was so highly dependent on him for drugs, and he knew it. He encouraged promiscuous behavior, and I did everything to appease him. He would be proud of me when I slept around and so I did just that. I gave my body away to strangers. He isolated me from my family who were aware that I had sold my body to him. Instead of finding help for me, they completely disowned me and began calling me names such as a whore or a prostitute. All of this made me highly dependent on him; I began doing everything for him. I was in survival mode. After I began experiencing major lows from coming down from the drugs and alcohol, he used this as an opportunity to convince me that I was bipolar or in his eyes, crazy. He began giving me prescription medication such as antipsychotics to try to “fix me.” I believed him, again. I started thinking that I was crazy. Over time, he began weaponizing these medications and threatening me the prospect of cutting me off if I was not taking them on a regular basis. I thought he just genuinely cared about me. I ruined all my relationships just to maintain his.

When I got raided by the FBI at 18, I was practically homeless after that fact. I thought that by him handing me money and his card to find different hotels to sleep in that he cared about me. I threw my life away when the FBI executed the search warrant. My drinking and drug use got completely out of hand. I stopped caring. I could not function without drugs or alcohol. Additionally, my health was shocking. He holds a deep-rooted resentment for people that are heavier and as I did everything to appease him, I would try to maintain a small frame. I got to the point that I would mix laxatives with my alcoholic beverages. My hair was falling out, yet I still believed that he cared about me and that he just wanted what was best for me.

This is just a small portion of the abuse that I received from him and to retell exactly what happened would not help me or other victims obtain any meaningful form of justice. Justice from my standpoint comes from activate and progressive legislation that listens to actual survivors of sex-trafficking who were then implicated in crimes themselves. I am not a unique case by any means; there are plenty of women just like me.

My record has made it almost impossible to reintegrate back into society. After the indictment, I completely turned my life around, I got sober and began giving back to the community I believe that I harmed. Yet, after four years of sobriety, earning an associate's degree with honors, finishing a bachelor's degree, participating in advocacy work, and other meaningful activities, society still perceives me as an individual who is marked by two horrific felonies on their record. This not only makes me feel like less of a woman, but it makes me feel like an outcast. I struggle building relationships with people and trusting them with such intimate parts of my past. I do not identify as a harmful person or even as a bad person, I do not believe that individuals are either good or bad. I do not subscribe to such black and white ways of thinking. I understand that the actions of my past were detrimental, yet I did not wake up and decide to become a sex-trafficker. I was groomed by a much older man who took advantage of my vulnerabilities to exploit not only myself but other people as well. It is shocking to me that had I been only 4 months younger than I was at the time that I would only be considered a victim instead of a defendant.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Gisela Castro Medina

Policy Briefing for ATIP Roundtable

Title: Addressing the Gaps in the Trafficking Survivors Relief Act (TSRA): The Urgent Need for Federal Vacature and Peer-Victimization Reform for Ages 18–24

Prepared by: Keyana Wheatley, Lived Experience Expert & Founder, Restorative Community Concepts

Date: 8/1/25

Executive Summary

While the Trafficking Survivors Relief Act (TSRA) represents a significant step forward in acknowledging and addressing the criminalization of trafficking victims, it fails to serve a large population of survivors: young adults ages 18–24 who were trafficked alongside minors and later prosecuted as co-defendants under federal conspiracy charges.

This population, often referred to as Peer-Victimized Offenders, includes survivors who are criminalized for actions that occurred during their own victimization. In many cases, the age difference between the “offender” and their peer victim is negligible—sometimes as little as four months—yet these distinctions lead to vastly different legal outcomes, with one youth being protected as a minor and the other being prosecuted under adult federal law.

The TSRA does not adequately address this reality. Nor does current federal policy offer a pathway to vacature or post-conviction relief for those who were coerced into committing trafficking-related crimes during their own exploitation.

Problem Overview

1. TSRA Limitations

- TSRA is limited in scope and does not offer broad vacature relief at the federal level.
- Survivors must prove a direct link between their victimization and their charges—often impossible for those charged with conspiracy, harboring, or aiding and abetting, especially when trafficking occurred in a peer-to-peer context.

2. Forced Criminality and Conspiracy Charges

- Survivors are routinely charged under federal conspiracy laws for “trafficking” their peers, even when:
 - They were minors or young adults themselves.

- They were under the control of an exploiter.
- They were not the primary beneficiary of any criminal activity.
- These charges are disproportionate and fail to account for the coercive environment of trafficking, where victims are often forced to recruit or manage others as part of their own survival.

3. Peer-Victimization and Arbitrary Age Cutoffs

- Trafficking is not neatly divided by age. Many victims who are 18 or 19 are criminalized for offenses involving 17-year-olds.
- Survivors just months older than their co-victims face prosecution as traffickers while their peers are offered diversion, protection, or support services.
- These young adults often experience the same coercion, violence, and grooming but are excluded from protective services due to arbitrary legal thresholds.

Recommendations

1. Federal Vacature Legislation

- Support a federal vacature law that:
 - Applies retroactively to survivors convicted of crimes directly resulting from their trafficking.
 - Includes coercive recruitment, harboring, conspiracy, and drug-related offenses.
 - Establishes presumptive relief for survivors under 25 who were criminalized during their own exploitation.

2. Recognition of Peer-Victimized Offenders

- Create legal language to define and protect Peer-Victimized Offenders, ensuring their:
 - Access to trauma-informed diversion programs.
 - Eligibility for non-carceral alternatives.
 - Opportunity for post-conviction relief and record clearance.

3. Training for Law Enforcement and Prosecutors

- Require specialized training on:
 - Forced criminality in trafficking cases.
 - The power dynamics between young adult survivors and their traffickers.
 - The nuances of peer exploitation, where survivors are coerced into roles that appear “criminal” on paper but are survival responses.

4. Data Collection & Oversight

- Fund and mandate research into:
 - The number of youth 18–24 criminalized for trafficking-related crimes during their own exploitation.
 - Outcomes for those prosecuted under conspiracy vs. those who received diversion or services.
 - Long-term impact of felony convictions on survivors’ housing, employment, and

reintegration.

Conclusion

Survivors of human trafficking—especially those aged 18–24—are falling through legal cracks. TSRA, while well-intentioned, excludes a significant number of young people coerced into criminality during their own exploitation. Without a federal vacature law and reforms recognizing peer-victimization, we risk re-traumatizing survivors and perpetuating cycles of incarceration and poverty.

We must listen to lived experience experts and center survivor-informed legislation that accounts for the complex, coercive nature of trafficking—especially when the line between victim and offender has been blurred by trauma, manipulation, and survival.



JORDAN COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER

"Where there's life there's hope"

Jordan Community Resource Center (Jordan CRC)

Founded in 2004 by Tenisha Gant-Watson, Jordan CRC is a sanctuary of hope and healing, rooted in faith and resilience.

Our Mission

To provide recovery housing, counseling, and economic development that ensures long-term sustainability and recovery without relapse.

Our Vision

Holistic, gender-responsive healing environments for women recovering from:

- Human trafficking
- Reentry challenges
- Substance abuse
- Homelessness

Recognition & Impact

- Federal OVC Grant recipient
- Invited guest at White House bipartisan roundtable
- Survivor leader on an international human-trafficking task force shaping policy
- Two decades of documented success and third-party research validation

The Oasis in the City *(Established 2023, Cleveland, OH)*

- Expansion of counseling & treatment services
- Employment & training opportunities
- Entrepreneurship programs with mentorship and access to capital
- Nia's Café: training women as baristas, pastry chefs, and banquet servers
- A hub for community connection and social impact

Why It Matters

With ongoing support, Jordan CRC empowers women, children, and families to thrive—creating long-lasting economic and social change.

30841 Euclid Ave. Suite 102 Willoughby, Ohio 44094 Tel (216) 441-2496

WOMEN'S TRANSITIONAL SUPPORT ORGANIZATION

www.jordan4change.org



Survivor Impact Statement – Tenisha Gant-Watson

When people ask me about the name *Jordan*, I tell them it's about crossing over, just like the river in scripture. Crossing from pain to purpose. From silence to voice. From bondage to freedom.

I know what it means to be muted, to be exploited, to feel broken. But I also know what it means to rise, to heal, and to lead.

Through Jordan CRC, I've walked alongside women who once felt hopeless but found strength. I've witnessed mothers regain their futures, survivors reclaim their voices, and families rebuild their lives. Our new facility, *The Oasis in the City*, is not just bricks and mortar, it is a promise. A promise that no woman will walk alone. That she will have a safe home, access to counseling, training, and opportunities to thrive.

I am living proof that transformation is possible. And my mission is to ensure every woman who enters Jordan CRC has that same chance at healing, freedom, and a future filled with hope.

We are not victims. We are survivors. And with your support, we will continue to rise.

Recommendations for an Executive Order to End Prostitution

Presented to the Anti-Trafficking in Persons (ATIP) Policy Roundtable, US Senate

Date: September 2025

Objective: These recommendations outline elements for a presidential Executive Order (EO) to abolish prostitution by focusing on demand while using existing federal authority without new funding.

Recommendations:

1. **Treat Individuals Selling Sex as Victims:** Direct federal law enforcement agencies to adopt policies recognizing individuals selling sex as victims, focusing prosecution on buyers to shift accountability away from victims.
2. **Promote Expungement of Prostitution Records:** Recommend that the Department of Justice (DOJ) draft model state legislation to seal or expunge non-violent prostitution convictions, aiding victim reintegration.
3. **Encourage Felony Classification for Buying Sex:** Recommend that the DOJ draft model state legislation classifying the purchase or solicitation of commercial sex as a felony in all cases, establishing a national standard to deter demand.
4. **Implement Sliding-Scale Fines to Fund Anti-Buyer Enforcement:** Recommend that model legislation for both purchase or solicitation include fines of at least \$1,000, scaled upwards by offender income. Direct that fines collected under model legislation be allocated to state and local police for anti-buyer task forces, sting operations, and increased digital forensics.
5. **Incentivize Trafficker Cooperation:** Recommend that the DOJ draft model guidelines stipulating that convicted traffickers serve prison sentences, but with eligibility for limited sentence reductions if—and only if—they provide substantial evidence against sex buyers. This ensures traffickers remain off the streets while leveraging their testimony to disrupt demand networks.
6. **Enable Survivor Civil Lawsuits:** Recommend that the DOJ draft model civil legislation allowing trafficking survivors to file lawsuits against buyers, separate from criminal proceedings.

7. **Extend Statutes of Limitations for Future Suits:** Recommend that model civil legislation extend statutes of limitations for survivor lawsuits filed after the EO's signing, allowing victims time to seek justice.
8. **Allocate Seized Assets to Victims:** Direct the DOJ to allocate assets seized from convicted sex buyers under federal forfeiture laws to a victims' restitution fund, ensuring compensation without state budget reliance.
9. **Support Full Damage Recovery:** Recommend that model civil legislation permit survivors to recover treble damages and attorney's fees, ensuring financially viable legal pursuits.

These recommendations advance anti-prostitution goals by supporting victims, deterring future demand, incentivizing cooperation, and leveraging existing resources for sustainable impact, while respecting state autonomy.

United States House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Federal Government Surveillance

Written Hearing Testimony

Anne Basham

CEO, Ascend Consulting

Founder & Chair, Interparliamentary Taskforce on Human Trafficking

“Protecting Victims of the Human Trafficking and Online Exploitation”

Thursday, February 27, 2025

Chairman Biggs, Ranking Member McBath, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today about protecting victims and survivors of human trafficking and online exploitation. My name is Anne Basham, and I am the Founder and Chair of the Interparliamentary Taskforce on Human Trafficking, the first global consortium of legislators and lived experience experts, and CEO of Ascend Consulting, a human rights advocacy firm which represents several anti-trafficking and exploitation organizations and convenes the bi-annual Anti-Trafficking in Persons Policy Roundtable in the U.S. Senate. I also serve on the Board of Directors for the Parliamentary Intelligence Security Forum.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of legislative solutions to protect victims and survivors of human trafficking and online exploitation. While there are many important anti-trafficking and exploitation bills in Congress right now, I will be focusing primarily on two legislative solutions that have broad support and fill critical gaps: the Trafficking Survivors Relief Act and the GRACIE Act.

The Trafficking Survivors Relief Act

There are two types of justice: punitive justice and restorative justice. Many people associate justice with punitive justice and think of incarcerating perpetrators and traffickers, and while punitive justice is crucial, this alone will not bring justice to survivors. Restorative justice advances restoration of dignity for victims and survivors—including the freedom to pursue a career and a life of their choice, and not to be forever limited by the violence and exploitation visited on them by their trafficker.

Human trafficking is perhaps the worst human rights violation in the world, and yet instead of receiving protection and justice, many trafficking victims are arrested and convicted of crimes their traffickers forced them to commit. Adult survivors of human trafficking too often have their

voices silenced by unjust felony convictions for crimes they committed as a direct result of their trafficking offenses¹. Traffickers often force their victims to commit crimes and the resulting criminal records prevent survivors from obtaining housing, employment, and other elements that are essential.

Currently, most states have legal mechanisms that allow trafficking survivors to seek vacatur or expungement of criminal records tied to their exploitation. However, there is no equivalent legal framework at the federal level. The Trafficking Survivors Relief Act (TSRA) which is sponsored by Rep. Fry, Rep. Lieu and Rep. Wagner and passed through the House Judiciary Committee last year seeks to address this gap by providing a pathway for survivors to vacate convictions and expunge arrest records for certain crimes that were a direct result of their trafficking. Additionally, the bill establishes an affirmative defense for victims, ensuring they can avoid unjust criminalization at the outset.

The need for this legislation is urgent. Many survivors continue to suffer the consequences of wrongful convictions, which prevent them from moving forward with their lives. I am grateful to lead the Trafficking Survivors Relief Act coalition for the past few years, and in Appendix A to this written testimony I have included survivor impact statements, including the story of Hollie Nadel, a trafficking survivor who, despite building an incredible career and being acknowledged as a trafficking survivor by the Court, recently lost everything due to a wrongful federal felony conviction. Her story is not unique—many survivors face similar obstacles that this legislation seeks to remedy. There is often an abuse to prison pipeline and child trafficking survivors are often forced into the adult criminal justice system because their traffickers coerce them into committing offenses like robbery, money laundering, and bank fraud. This phenomenon, known as “forced criminality,” can lead to survivors being misidentified as willing perpetrators².

The Trafficking Survivors Relief Act (TRSA) provides:

- **A pathway to vacate convictions for crimes that survivors were forced to commit.** Survivors should not be permanently branded by the criminal records imposed on them by their traffickers.
- **Availability of funding for survivors’ civil legal services** through the Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women. Good attorneys are expensive, and most survivors cannot afford the legal representation necessary to clear their records.
- **A pathway to restorative justice.** Vacatur secures survivors opportunities for employment, and employment provides more than just a paycheck: it builds self-respect,

¹ <https://sharedhope.org/2022/06/14/unjust-criminalization/>

² <https://rights4girls.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/The-Abuse-to-Prison-Pipeline-2024.pdf>

independence, new skills, and new connections with people of integrity and excellence. Survivors deserve the opportunity to define themselves by their futures, not by their past.

For both sex and labor trafficking survivors, their exploitation was uniquely tied to employment; they were the product sold by the trafficker to make money in a criminal business operation, so for survivors employment is more than a paycheck. Employment is a means of restoring dignity, building self-sufficiency, and recovering a new identity that is not defined by their past. Employment not only changes the circumstances for a survivor, but it often changes the most important opinion of all – how survivors see themselves. This is why it is essential for a survivor of trafficking to be able to have a career without being branded with a criminal record given to them by their trafficker. The Trafficking Survivors Relief Act helps make this possible.

The GRACIE Act

What is most alarming is that for many of these adults who are convicted in their late teens and early twenties, their trafficking experience began when they were children. Research shows that the average age at which children are targeted for both sex trafficking and labor trafficking is 11 to 14 years old.³ While the more than 200,000 unaccompanied migrant children missing from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service program⁴ has garnered due public attention, many people do not know that one of the main trafficking pipelines in the U.S. is our domestic foster care system. As the National Foster Youth Initiative has shown, more than 60% of child trafficking victims are current or former foster youth.⁵ The GRACIE Act (Generate Recordings of All CPS Interviews Everywhere), which was introduced just last week by Senator Blackburn and Senator Ossoff, is a Child Protective Services modernization bill that equips Child Protective Services (CPS) to interrupt the foster care-to-trafficking pipeline by incentivizing states to mandate audio or video recordings of all CPS interviews. It also provides necessary transparency and accountability to those who are on the frontlines of protecting children.

Let me share with you the story that inspired the GRACIE Act. “Abby,” as I will refer to her, was a young girl caught in a nightmare that too many children face. Her parents were divorced and during a visit to her father’s house a quarrel escalated into physical violence, and Abby’s father grabbed her neck. The incident was reported to a counselor, and the case was referred to CPS. The caseworker interviewed Abby at her mother’s home because school happened to be closed that day because of snow. The mother listened from the next room and recorded the interview. Abby told the investigator the same story. However, the case was curiously dismissed. Months after the case was closed it was discovered that the official report distorted Abby’s

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK430910/>

⁴ <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2024-08/OIG-24-46-Aug24.pdf>

⁵ <https://nfyi.org/mission/>

testimony, downplaying the assault as a mere grab to the arm—not the neck, an act which could have qualified as a felony under state law. Abby’s voice was silenced.

37.4% of children in the United States will be interviewed by CPS before age 18.⁶ Without recordings, children’s testimonies can be easily misrepresented, manipulated, or even disregarded. How many more even worse acts of child abuse, exploitation, and human trafficking have gone unaddressed because of inept or biased caseworkers, unreliable documentation, or simple human error?

Let me provide an analogy for you. I have here a copy of the Congressional Record from just one day on the House floor. This Record contains every word that was spoken on the House floor in a 24-hour span. What if you as Members of Congress went to the House floor and gave an important testimony, and it was never recorded? What if there was only one witness in the hearing room—not a stenographer, but an observer who recorded a personal analysis of your testimony? Would you take this personal analysis as an accurate record of your testimony? Do you want the most important statements of your life to be at the mercy of one stranger with a pen?

I encourage you to read the expert impact statement from a human trafficking prosecutor in Appendix B. Camila Zolfaghari was rarely able to use the scribbled or typed unreliable notes from a CPS interview when prosecuting cases. Recorded interviews not only help prosecutors, but they also decrease the number of times a survivor must recount their traumatic experiences.

CPS interview protocols are outdated and the lack of transparency and accountability within these child welfare systems is appalling. Police are required to wear body cameras in most states, and the Department of Justice has mandated interrogation recordings for about a decade. But child victims of neglect, violence, and abuse are not afforded the same basic and necessary protections—despite the fact that the National Children’s Advocacy Center and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention at the Department of Justice have long recommended electronic recordings of child interviews to ensure transparency, accuracy, and accountability.

If the GRACIE Act and the complementary state laws pass, it will be the biggest child welfare reform in our lifetime. I urge you to pass the GRACIE Act and ensure that basic CPS modernization standards protect the most vulnerable children from violence, exploitation, and human trafficking.

⁶ [https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5227926/#:~:text=We%20estimate%20that%2037.4%25%20of.%2FPacific%20Islanders%20\(10.2%25\)](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5227926/#:~:text=We%20estimate%20that%2037.4%25%20of.%2FPacific%20Islanders%20(10.2%25))

The National Human Trafficking Database Act: Strengthening Our Response to Human Trafficking

Finally, the National Trafficking Database Act, introduced by Representative Kiley, Representative Hageman and Representative Hank Johnson in the House and Senator Blackburn and Senator Klobuchar in the Senate, represents a historic step forward in the fight against human trafficking. Data allows legislators, government leaders, and others to identify survivors by documenting and accounting for each survivor whose story deserves to be heard.

This bill would establish a national human trafficking database housed at the Department of Justice, creating a much-needed mechanism to centralize and improve trafficking information about individuals. By incentivizing state law enforcement agencies to report data through the Office for Victims of Crime grant funding, this legislation strengthens collaboration between federal, state, and local partners—reducing silos and ensuring a more coordinated response to this crisis. This database would allow state and federal government to track patterns, identify hotspots, and allocate resources more effectively. It would also foster collaboration among federal, state, and local agencies, ensuring that data is not siloed but shared in a way that enhances our collective ability to respond to trafficking.

These legislative solutions address the biggest gaps in U.S. domestic efforts to protect human trafficking, and they ensure that survivors are heard and seen. I urge each of you to co-sponsor the Trafficking Survivors Relief Act and the GRACIE Act and to support other important anti-trafficking and exploitation bills such as the National Human Trafficking Database Act, the Human Trafficking and Exploitation Prevention Training Act, the Crime Victims Fund Stabilization Act, the SHIELD Act, the Renewed Hope Act and the Take It Down Act. The safety and future of our nation's children and all trafficking survivors depend on their passage.

APPENDIX A

February 27, 2025

Dear Chairman Biggs and Ranking Member McBath:

I write to you today as a Human Resources and Operations Specialist, a business owner, a certified Anti-Money Laundering Specialist, a lived experience expert on PTSD and trauma, a policy consultant on Anti-Trafficking legislation, a human rights advocate, an artist, a daughter, as sister, a friend, a leader, and truly so much more. But lastly, I want to highlight that I am a Survivor of Human Trafficking who was federally criminalized as a result of my trafficking victimization. I say it last because it is something that happened to me, but it does not define me. It is not my identity. Nothing will ever make what happened acceptable, but as a result I am a survivor through and through. I am the strongest version of myself that I have ever been, and I choose to get up every single day and fight with everything I have to make this world a better place. To make it that our children and our children's children grow up in a better world. To make it that other survivors won't have to go through what we went through.

I want to clarify some common misconceptions. There is no black and white survivor story. There are all types of trafficking in this world. I am grateful to say that I did not grow up in a broken home. I was not an at-risk youth. I was an honor student. I received a talent and academic scholarship to go to Ithaca College to pursue a career in Costume Design. I graduated Cum Laude with a BFA in Theatre Production Design and began a successful career in television, film, and theatre. My moral compass was always straight. If anything, I was a goody two shoes. The closest I ever came to a crime was one time accidentally walking out with a water bottle that I had opened since I was thirsty while shopping at CVS- as soon as I realized, I went back immediately, and paid for it. However, none of this matters because none of that stopped me like so many others from being vulnerable. In my early twenties, I was laid off from my job. It also coincided with heartbreak after a relationship ended. I was a perfectionist. I was so hard on myself. I felt like a failure. I was ashamed. I didn't want to ask for help. I went into a depression. And that is when I met my traffickers. I was a prime target for them. And they were patient. It was a long grooming process. A process whereby they learned my vulnerabilities in order to exploit them. They gained my trust, they built up my confidence- they helped me start working again in my chosen profession. Just when I felt that my life was getting better, they went to the next phase. The take down.

This turned into eight years of abuse - abuse that a judge called akin to torture - involved involuntary domestic servitude, labor trafficking, sex trafficking and finally, forced marriage. I was under constant threat and fear for my life and for the safety of my loved ones. I was made to live out of suitcases, and was isolated from those who could help me. I took actions under extreme duress to survive. I received no profit from the crimes of my traffickers, only suffering. And yet today, along with so many other survivors, I pay the price for my traffickers' crimes. Many survivors during their trafficking victimization may experience "forced criminality," in which traffickers coerce their victims into committing crimes to profit the traffickers. As a result, trafficking victims may face unjust prosecution and punishment for their traffickers' crimes.

I did not benefit from any of this. Every penny that I "earned" at the direction of my traffickers was passed directly to them. For years, I lived out of a suitcase and I was rendered completely dependent on the traffickers. I was tortured. Yet, I was prosecuted. I had to resign from a job that I had only stellar performance reviews from when my unjust conviction for bank fraud and money laundering was finalized. I have to work so much harder now to earn a living due to my unjust criminalization. This is

often what leads to survivors being revictimized. Despite this, I am continuing to rebuild my life in ways within my control to do so.

During this time since my sentencing in September of 2024, I have continued my work that I have been doing over the last 7 years within this sector. Some of these highlights include the following:

- I started my own Human Resources and Recruiting firm. I also use this expertise to mentor and coach survivors to help them gain better employment and tackle the hurdles that we have to face.
- As a Certified Anti-Money Laundering specialist, I work with financial institutions nationwide to educate on the realities of Human Trafficking and how they can identify trafficking through the financial footprint and properly escalate to the authorities.
- I provided survivor support to financial institutions for the Survivor Inclusion Initiative.
- I worked on and testified on The Debt Bondage Repair Act and the Trafficking Survivors Relief Act. I am continuing to educate on these two pieces of legislation.
- I have been a featured speaker at ACAMS AML Symposiums, NGA's Criminal Justice Policy Advisor's briefing on Human Trafficking, and The Virginia Attorney General's Annual Human Trafficking Summit, HHS
- I was awarded the Pembroke Fellowship at the Human Trafficking Legal Center to help with Survivor Leadership Programs
- I am Secretary for the Survivor Advisory Board and a policy consultant.

I am determined to use my lived experience from these horrific years to bring meaningful change and protect others from human traffickers, and if I can't stop it from happening before, then I can at least help to provide a solution. It is important that there is recourse in place for victims who have been unjustly prosecuted. I urge you to please help pass this legislation to provide a vehicle for expungement for victims of trafficking like myself and so many others. The passage of this federal bill would merely bring federal procedure into alignment with state procedure which already provides for this relief for state criminal convictions. This will provide salvation for myself and so many others. Without it, I don't know what the future holds. The Trafficking Survivors Relief Act will provide recourse to right this injustice that I and so many survivors face. It will help to restore faith in a system that is meant to protect, rather than punish us.

Sincerely,

Hollie Nadel

Lucy Bloom
Director of Impact Strategies
Altus Solutions, Inc.
February 24, 2025

Chairman Andy Biggs
464 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Lucy McBath
2246 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Andy Biggs and Ranking Member Lucy McBath,

The Trafficking Survivors Relief Act provides courts and defense with tools to recognize forced criminality in human trafficking cases and to relieve the survivor from criminal charges. As a survivor leader and an advocate who has stood in court rooms alongside survivors and sat at tables with judges, defense attorneys and prosecutors struggling to find legal remedy, I can tell you that THIS IS A BIG DEAL!

As survivors are charged for crimes they are forced to commit as part of being human trafficked, they are further harmed by the very system intended to protect them. And independence is out of reach as a criminal record now stands in the way of living-wage employment, housing, and educational opportunities. Not being identified as victims of a crime, they often return to their trafficker after serving time, not seeing any other option, and not having the options presented to them that they would have had they been identified and received victim services.

Seeing survivors charged for the crimes committed against them has been one of the most heartbreaking experiences in this work. Judges and Attorneys need these tools to support the freedom of survivors. Please do all that you can to support the TSRA!

Sincerely grateful for your service,

Lucy Bloom



Chairman Biggs, Ranking Member McBath, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the matter of essential trafficking survivor relief for victims, like Emma.

Emma was lured by her trafficker at 16, after being abused by the adults responsible for her care. She fled to him for food and shelter, and he demanded sex. He grew violent and kept her from school. He hurt her so badly she was hospitalized. Terrified, she did what he demanded: taking pictures of his other victims and posting them online. She quietly taught the other victims how to protect themselves from violent buyers. Despite the evidence of her own victimization, she received a ten-year prison sentence for child sex trafficking and was added to the sex offender registry.

Tragically, Emma’s story is like many others analyzed by Shared Hope International in the Victim Offender Intersectionality (VOI) report and training for stakeholders. There is a great injustice complicating the battle against trafficking in the United States referred to as victim-offender intersectionality, or VOI. Increasingly we are seeing trafficking victims charged, often alongside their own trafficker, with crimes related to their victimization—even sometimes with trafficking others. Injustice is inherent in this response; it is inconsistent with the actual dynamics of how trafficking occurs, the nature and extent of control exerted by sex traffickers, and the influence of trauma on sex trafficking survivors. While we work to end VOI criminalization and welcome the 45 state laws providing post-conviction relief, the many victims already convicted under federal offenses need the Trafficking Survivor’s Relief Act (“TSRA”) to rebuild their lives.

Since the 117th Congress, Shared Hope has worked in coalition with national partners, lived experience experts, and congressional offices to introduce and pass the TSRA. It is critical legislation that, when passed, will enable survivors of human trafficking to rebuild their lives free of the lasting stigma of a federal criminal record. Simultaneously, Shared Hope has engaged in post-conviction relief advocacy at the state level, achieving some form of vacatur or expungement law for survivors in 45 states including D.C., allowing survivors to clear criminal records and allowing them to fully engage in community roles previously closed to them as felons, like volunteering in their children’s schools and coaching their children’s sports teams. These laws have demonstrated profound benefits, including increased access to employment, stable housing, education, and financial independence—key factors in preventing re-victimization.

As states gain momentum in passing comprehensive post-conviction relief legislation, Congress must also act. The TSRA establishes a pathway for survivors to vacate non-violent criminal convictions that are a direct result of their trafficking experience, as well as an opportunity to raise an affirmative defense to avoid criminal liability. This provision is essential because it recognizes that survivors are often coerced or manipulated into committing crimes by their traffickers and should not be further victimized by the criminal justice system.

Having walked alongside, befriended, and employed survivors who were wrongfully criminalized, we know firsthand the insurmountable barriers and vulnerabilities created by criminal records stemming from trafficking victimization. Believing survivors cannot be supported and protected if they are being criminalized, Shared Hope staunchly supports the passage of the Trafficking Survivors Relief Act as a critical step towards true justice.

Shared Hope International is a nonprofit dedicated to preventing, restoring, and bringing justice to survivors of child and youth sex trafficking. Shared Hope has been working across the country around the globe for over 25 years to guide and support appropriate responses to protect survivors, hold offenders to account, and ultimately prevent the crime entirely.

Thank you for holding this vitally important hearing.

APPENDIX B

February 27, 2025

Dear Chairman Biggs and Ranking Member McBath,

My name is Camila Zolfaghari and I am the Vice President of Government Affairs for Street Grace and the former Chief Human Trafficking Prosecutor for the Georgia Attorney General. Street Grace is the single point of contact for survivors services in East Tennessee and Georgia working closely to support law enforcement on the frontlines.

Human Traffickers prey on the most vulnerable. Most minor trafficking victims have multiple interactions with CPS both before, during, and after their trafficking. **Research published using data from Street Grace's direct services has found that 65% of minor victims of trafficking have a history of placement in foster care, and the average number of out-of-home placements was 3.47 (Furlong & Hinnant, 2024).** Also, research has shown that **"approximately 1 out of 5 children in foster care have been paid by someone for sex."** Courtney et al. (2007). Only a very small portion of these cases result in an exploiter being prosecuted.

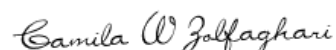
As a long time human trafficking prosecutor, I relied heavily on recorded law enforcement forensic interviews in my prosecutions, but rarely if ever was able to use the scribbled or typed unreliable notes from a CPS interview.

Recorded interviews will not only be useful for prosecutions, but also decrease the number of times a victim needs to recount their traumatic experiences. This is particularly important for trafficking survivors, as repeated interviews can be re-traumatizing.

Time after time, both prosecutors and service providers, see that the longer an individual experiences the trauma of trafficking, the longer the recovery process will take. Recorded interviews can capture more detailed information, leading to earlier identification of trafficking victims. This is crucial, as earlier intervention can significantly impact the recovery process and the victim's ability to participate in prosecutions.

As I write, names and faces of those that we failed to identify as trafficking victims through many interactions with CPS come to mind. I strongly believed recorded interviews will reduce trauma for survivors, help identify victims sooner, and improve the quality of interviews thereby increasing the prosecution of traffickers.

Sincerely,



Camila W Zolfaghari, JD, LLM
Vice President of Government Affairs
Streetgrace.org

Impact Statement – GRACIE Act & TSRA

February 27, 2025

Dear Chairman Biggs and Ranking Member McBath:

My name is Ashlie Bryant, and I am the CEO of 3Strands Global Foundation, an organization dedicated to preventing human trafficking and supporting survivors through education, employment, and reintegration programs. I write to express my strong support for the GRACIE Act and the Trafficking Survivor Relief Act, two critical bills that will protect vulnerable children and provide relief for trafficking survivors.

Human trafficking is a national crisis, and children in the foster care system are among the most vulnerable. Of the 390,000 children in foster care, 60% of child sex trafficking victims have a history of foster care involvement, and one in three foster youth who run away are approached by a trafficker within 48 hours. These numbers underscore the urgent need for reforms to prevent exploitation.

At 3Strands Global Foundation, we have seen firsthand how instability, multiple placements, and lack of trusted adults put system-involved youth at heightened risk. We operate a drop in center for at risk youth at the intersection of foster care and human trafficking in California, and our programs have educated 1.13 million students, teachers, and community members and provided employment and reintegration support to over 1,000 survivors.

The GRACIE Act, introduced by Senators Blackburn and Ossoff, would require recording CPS interviews with children and adults, ensuring critical documentation is available for investigations. In my 15 years of working alongside survivors, I have met many whose cries for help were lost in an overburdened system. Properly recorded interviews will:

- Improve victim identification through reliable documentation.
- Reduce retraumatization by limiting repeated interviews.
- Strengthen evidence collection to hold traffickers accountable.

We must ensure vulnerable children are not overlooked due to poor documentation or agency miscommunication.

Additionally, survivors of human trafficking often face lasting consequences due to criminal records tied to their exploitation. The Trafficking Survivor Relief Act allows survivors to clear non-violent convictions resulting from their trafficking, removing barriers to employment, housing, and education.

Through my work, I have met thousands of survivors who, despite escaping their traffickers, remain punished by records that should never define their futures. This bill will allow them to rebuild their lives with dignity and stability.

As a longtime advocate, I have seen how policy change can transform lives. The GRACIE Act will help protect children from trafficking, while the Trafficking Survivor Relief Act will provide justice for survivors. I urge Congress to take action now—so no more children fall through the cracks, and no more survivors remain burdened by a past that was never their choice.

Sincerely,

Ashlie Bryant
CEO, 3Strands Global Foundation

APPENDIX C

Impact Statement

Greetings and thank you for your consideration of the National Human Trafficking Database Act.

The National Human Trafficking Database Act was inspired by and modeled after our work at Engage Together, so it may be helpful to understand that history and its impact. Since 2014, Engage Together has worked with hundreds of communities and thousands of anti-trafficking efforts across all 50 states to strengthen community response to end and prevent human trafficking. What we know is this: While the problem of human trafficking is certainly global, the solutions are often local. Prevention, intervention, and care all happen locally; and developing effective, localized solutions begins with data.

The Engage Together project provides a comprehensive picture of a state's current response to and risk for human trafficking. This risk and response analysis provides a roadmap for change - for all stakeholders. Then based on that data-driven roadmap, Engage Together partners closely with community leaders (including task forces, universities, nonprofits, and more) to strengthen community-based response. This process of identifying current strengths, gaps, and needs at both local community and broader regional levels leads to many impact-full and transformational outcomes, including: expanded employment and educational opportunities for survivors, stronger collaborations of law enforcement and service providers, better screening resources for earlier identification and intervention, needed reforms implemented in state laws and local systems, states receiving federal funding to support their anti-trafficking efforts, enhanced prevention strategies, increased support for local programs, and so much more.

While data is only the beginning, it is the critical foundation on which all efforts must be built to succeed. It was the latest iteration of Engage Together's project in Tennessee, accomplished in close collaboration with our partners at the Belmont Data & AI Collaborative, in support of and alongside the TN Bureau of Investigation's Human Trafficking Task Force and Tennessee Counter Trafficking Alliance, that caught the attention of Senators Blackburn and Klobuchar and inspired the bill before you today. It is a bill that will strengthen our nation's work to end and prevent human trafficking and care well for all those impacted by it. We look forward to the impact that will flow from this bill should it pass, and we stand ready to serve when it does.

Sincerely,

Ashleigh S. Chapman, JD
Founder/CEO, Engage Together®



INTERPARLIAMENTARY TASKFORCE
ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING



TaskforceonHT.org | Washington, DC