

Date: March 27, 2023

To: Chair Jamie Becker-Finn

Republican Lead – Representative Peggy Scott

Committee Administrator Anna Borgerding

Chair Kelly Moller

Republican Lead - Representative Paul Novotny

-
Committee Administrator Ellen McDaniel

Chair Ron Latz

Ranking Minority Member - Senator Warren Limmer

Committee Administrator Nicole Kaplan

From: The Enitan Story Executive Director

Chairs and majority leads of the committees,

The Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, as the leader of the Minnesota Human Trafficking Investigators Task Force (MNHITF), is a key component to the holistic statewide approach of combatting human trafficking of all forms from border to border across the state of Minnesota. MNHITF strives to provide victim-survivors with services through the collaborations of many statewide partnerships as well as hold the traffickers accountable.

The State of Minnesota recognizes that human trafficking (both sex and labor) is a significant issue affecting children, youth, and adults. Due to the state's efforts to strengthen its human trafficking response, more is known about the extent of human trafficking in Minnesota. These efforts have included, but are not limited to the following achievements:

Since its inception, the MNHITF has:

- Formed a statewide response to tips/leads on sex trafficking incidents.
- Brought structure to the state for sex trafficking investigations.
- Hosted regular intelligence-sharing meetings across jurisdictions.
- Conducted recovery and juvenile demand suppression operations across Minnesota.
- Provided expert input, along with the Tribes United Against Sex Trafficking (TRUST) Task Force, to YourCallMN, a statewide human trafficking awareness campaign.
- Collaborated with TRUST to create a human trafficking response to the Line 3 Replacement Project that spanned northern Minnesota. This joint response included prevention, training, proactive operations and reactive investigations.
- Administered a statewide human trafficking deconfliction system.

- Coordinated with the Minnesota Department of Health Safe Harbor and the Regional Navigator Infrastructure supporting victim support services.
- Created a coordinated response with the Minnesota Department of Human Services Child Protection and Child Welfare.
- Created Labor Trafficking Protocols for law enforcement, the first of its kind in our country.

Sex trafficking investigation funding has been a priority at the legislature, resulting in increased awareness with so much great work done to eradicate this heinous crime of predators preying on the vulnerabilities of their victims. Until 2021, the work of the MNHITF was fully funded by a grant through the Office of Justice Programs (OJP). This funding, however, did not continue at the level necessary to meet the demands placed on the MNHITF. Direct funding to MNHITF would create the ability for the statewide coordinated response necessary and would also provide the ability to respond to and investigate labor trafficking.

Labor trafficking, another type of human trafficking, has not received the same investment or increased awareness, though it shares many similarities with sex trafficking. Unfortunately, this lack of awareness means that the crime of labor trafficking is severely under-identified and under-reported, resulting in fewer crime investigations and prosecutions and no infrastructure for victim services and support specific to labor trafficking.

In spite of this, labor trafficking is a growing area of concern for investigators, prosecutors, and victim advocates in Minnesota, including the BCA. The *2019 Human Trafficking in Minnesota: A Report to the Minnesota Legislature* noted that during 2017, law enforcement agencies identified 21 labor trafficking victims and service providers identified 394 labor trafficking victims this report and other studies show that these numbers only scratch the surface of the true victimization occurring in Minnesota and throughout the United States, due to significant underreporting.¹ Of the victims identified, 44 percent were adult men and 42 percent were adult women. The victims were disproportionately from communities of color, particularly Asian or Asian American (56%) and Hispanic/Latino (28%).

Victims were found in many labor sectors including households (housekeeping, nanny), restaurants (40%), construction, and agriculture. While this data reveals fewer labor trafficking investigations and prosecutions than sex trafficking, it shows the need for a more systemic response given the high number of victims served in the community, with which this bill aid.

We, therefore, request that the Governor's Budget Request entitled "Human Trafficking Response Task Force" be included in the Omnibus bill.

Sincerely,



Bukola Oriola,
Executive Director, The Enitan Story/Former Member, U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking