



**Alliance To End
Slavery & Trafficking**



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ATEST and HEAL Trafficking Urge Congress to Preserve Safeguards for Vulnerable Migrant Children

WASHINGTON – A new funding proposal pending before the Senate this week will rollback protections for children coming to the U.S. to flee violence, human trafficking, and other forms of abuse in Central America. The bill would undo provisions of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), which was reauthorized by Congress and signed by the president just weeks ago.

ATEST and HEAL Trafficking urge Congress to reject the Central American Minors Protection Act of 2019, which is embedded in the administration's proposal to reopen federal agencies that are currently closed. The act contains draconian new procedures for vulnerable children from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras who seek refuge in the U.S.

The bill puts children at increased risk of harm in several ways, including increased risk of suffering trafficking or not being able to flee from trafficking.

First, contrary to international law, the bill would require children to apply for U.S. asylum outside the U.S., on their own, and pay an application fee. This contradicts long-standing U.S. law, providing asylum seekers refuge within U.S. borders as their cases are adjudicated, and leaves children in potentially dangerous conditions.

Second, children would be limited to apply for only one type of immigration protection even if they are eligible for multiple avenues of immigration relief under applicable law. The bill creates dramatically lowered quotas for how many children could apply each year. Thousands of children will be denied even the chance to plead their case.

Third, the bill will lead to traumatized children being forced to describe their trafficking ordeal without the proper support of counselors. A trafficked child would also be required to have a "qualified adult" already inside the U.S. to be eligible for protection. Such provisions decimate trafficking and asylum protections for Central American children, particularly the most vulnerable, who do not have a parent or guardian in the U.S.

These provisions are being rushed to a Senate floor vote without the benefit of public hearings or the input of government staffers, many of whom have been furloughed.

The TVPA has been the cornerstone of America's efforts to protect victims and the vulnerable. The law's provisions have been crafted through bipartisan efforts over many years. Its safeguards for vulnerable migrant children must not be undone. We urge Congress to reject this harmful bill to obliterate protections for unaccompanied children, leaving them vulnerable to serious harm and human trafficking.

The Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking (ATEST) is a U.S. based coalition that advocates for solutions to prevent and end all forms of human trafficking and modern slavery around the world. ATEST advocates for lasting solutions to prevent labor and sex trafficking, hold perpetrators accountable, ensure justice for victims and empower survivors with tools for recover. ATEST's collective experience implementing programs at home and abroad provides the coalition with unparalleled breadth and depth of expertise. ATEST member organizations include: Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST), Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), Free the Slaves, Human Trafficking Institute, National Network for Youth (NN4Y), Polaris, Safe Horizon, Solidarity Center, T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights, United Way Worldwide, Verité, and Vital Voices Global Partnership.
[\(https://endslaveryandtrafficking.org/\)](https://endslaveryandtrafficking.org/)

HEAL Trafficking is a united group of multidisciplinary professionals dedicated to ending human trafficking and supporting its survivors, from a public health perspective. The HEAL Trafficking mission is to mobilize a shift in the anti-trafficking paradigm toward approaches rooted in public health principles and trauma-informed care by: expanding the evidence base; enhancing collaboration among multidisciplinary stakeholders; educating the broader anti-trafficking, public health, and health care communities; and advocating for policies and funding streams that enhance the public health response to trafficking and support for survivors. HEAL Trafficking has approximately 2,500 network participants from all 50 states and the District of Columbia.
[\(https://healtrafficking.org/\)](https://healtrafficking.org/)