



Congress Must Address Human Trafficking in Emergency Funding Legislation

Joint Statement | April 2020

Human trafficking thrives in times of crisis and uncertainty, when the needs of the most vulnerable among us are often overlooked. Congress has passed coronavirus relief legislation, providing significant new resources for education, early care, housing, nutrition and services. However, the emergency assistance falls short in significant ways.

Due to underlying vulnerabilities, those most at risk of, and victim to, human trafficking and labor exploitation will experience disproportionate impacts as a result of COVID-19. Current funds allocated for human trafficking services and prevention are insufficient to protect the marginalized from sexual abuse and severe labor exploitation. Low-wage workers, including documented and undocumented immigrants; runaway and homeless youth; those fleeing domestic violence and sexual assault; and previously identified victims of human trafficking who need ongoing support and access to additional resources are being left behind. Notably, congressional action to date has failed to provide support to immigrant workers, including undocumented workers, many of whom are providing essential services but are at greater risk for forced labor and other forms of human trafficking during this pandemic.

The Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking (ATEST), in partnership with Freedom Network USA (FNUSA), have developed supplemental appropriations requests and policy recommendations to address the most urgent needs of human trafficking survivors, victims, and those particularly susceptible to exploitation. We urge Congress to include these provisions in “Phase Four” of its COVID-19 response.

Summary of Funding Requests:

- **Direct Victim Services:** \$200 million for victim service programs
- **Data on Trafficking in Crises:** \$5 million for research on how increased unemployment and economic and social instabilities impact human trafficking
- **International Human Trafficking Vulnerability:** \$5 million to combat spikes in human trafficking that typically follow natural disasters such as a global pandemic
- **Integrate Counter-trafficking Strategies:** \$350,000 to distribute urgent educational materials about human trafficking as part of U.S. funded humanitarian relief projects.

Summary of Policy Recommendations:

- **Unemployment Assistance and Tax Rebate Exclusion:** Expand tax rebates to all federal taxpayers and migrant workers; non-immigrant guest workers should have access to state and federally available unemployment assistance
- **Temporary Worker Visas:** Ensure that guest workers already in the United States have expedited renewal of their current visas so that they are not displaced by new guest workers; they should have access to COVID-19 related health care. Guest workers awaiting visas in countries of origin must receive consular screenings and Know Your Rights materials to reduce vulnerability to exploitation. Visa sponsors and employers must receive clear instruction on upholding guest worker rights. Guest workers should have the ability to change employers while in the U.S., and mechanisms to report abuse.
- **Enforcement of the Tariff Act:** As the U.S. government seeks to replace and increase necessary medical equipment and supplies, we must ensure protections for workers producing these goods in both domestic and overseas factories.

See the full funding requests and policy recommendations, with detailed explanations, [here](#).

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 in the U.S. and around the world. ATEST is comprised of the following organizations: 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, Verité and Vital Voices Global Partnership. Please do not hesitate to contact ATEST co-chairs Anita Teekah (Anita.Teekah@safehorizon.org) or Terry FitzPatrick (terry.fitzpatrick@freetheslaves.net) with any questions. www.endslaveryandtrafficking.org

Freedom Network USA (FNUSA), established in 2001, is a coalition of 68 non-governmental organizations and individuals that provide services to, and advocate for the rights of, trafficking survivors in the United States. As the largest network of providers working directly with trafficking survivors in the US, we are uniquely situated to evaluate the impact of U.S. government efforts to address human trafficking, identify challenges, and propose solutions. Contact Executive Director Jean Bruggeman (jean@freedomnetworkusa.org) with any questions. <https://freedomnetworkusa.org/>

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