



March 28, 2023

The Honorable Hal Rogers  
Chair  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Commerce, Justice, Science and Related  
Agencies

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Chair  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Commerce, Justice, Science and Related  
Agencies

The Honorable Matt Cartwright  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Commerce, Justice, Science and Related  
Agencies

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Commerce, Justice, Science and Related  
Agencies

Dear Representative Rogers, Representative Cartwright, Senator Shaheen, and Senator Moran,

The Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking (ATEST) thanks you for your leadership in the fight to end child labor, forced labor and human trafficking. We are grateful for the increased support these programs have received over the past decade. We seek your assistance again in funding essential programs in the FY24 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies bill.

The Justice Department plays a vital role in bringing traffickers to justice. Trafficking cases are often complicated and involve lengthy legal proceedings requiring additional resources for prosecutors as well as for victims who often experience severe trauma requiring intensive therapy and long-term services and support to rebuild their lives. Most victims require comprehensive case management, legal services and access to housing supported by trauma-informed and culturally competent victim services and community-based organizations to support their goals and help them navigate the often re-traumatizing court process.

This letter provides concrete recommendations from ATEST — a nonpartisan coalition of organizations working at the front lines in the United States and internationally — that articulate how Congress can provide resources critical to ensure the U.S. government takes a comprehensive, victim-centered approach to address labor and sex trafficking and to support

survivors' paths to self-sufficiency.

Human trafficking is one of the fastest growing criminal industries in the world, affecting 28 million people, and generating more than \$150 billion in annual profits for traffickers. More people have become vulnerable to trafficking because of ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the affordable housing crisis, impacts of climate change, the invasion of Ukraine, and global economic disruptions. A robust fiscal response is essential to mitigate these increased risks. We understand the fiscal challenges our nation faces. However, we cannot lose sight of the human tragedies occurring every day within and beyond our borders. Trafficking is an economic, national security, criminal justice, civil rights, and human rights issue. We can eradicate it only by dedicating the necessary resources.

## **DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

### **Office of Justice Programs / State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Victim Services Grants and Human Trafficking Task Forces: \$140,000,000**

To attempt to meet the growing needs of victims and survivors, we request \$140,000,000 for human trafficking survivors and law enforcement through the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) victim services grants and human trafficking task forces.

Survivors of trafficking are seeking assistance in greater numbers. We are accordingly requesting an increase in funding for FY24. The National Human Trafficking Hotline, which maintains a nationwide database of service providers for victims, reports that calls for help have dramatically increased by 172 percent from 2017 through 2022. Preliminary data show that in FY22 alone, the Trafficking Hotline identified more than 10,000 situations of trafficking and received more than 9,900 calls, texts, chats, and messages directly from survivors.

Data from the Hotline and anecdotal evidence from established service providers demonstrate that insufficient resources remain a significant barrier for survivors. For example, service providers report an increase in survivor requests for rental assistance, medical cost coverage, and food vouchers. While some of these growing requests could be met, service providers had to negotiate with landlords and medical providers to accept lower rent and medical bill payments because funding was insufficient to cover these costs.

Given the increased vulnerability survivors face through financial, legal and social instability, we request that no less than \$120,000,000 of the appropriation be for victim services including intensive case management, and legal and shelter services. While housing needs remain one of the biggest resource scarcities for human trafficking victims, service provider funding must be comprehensive and meaningfully address food insecurity, the need for clothing, medical, dental and mental health care and treatment, and financial instability from un/under-employment, lack

of educational opportunities, and other inequities. We request that OVC review monies granted to law enforcement task forces to ensure the task forces are adopting and implementing victim-centered approaches.

We also request that funding for victim services grant programs at DOJ remain within the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC). OVC has done an efficient and effective job in administering victim services grants and should retain this role without disruption. Given the increase in grant funding that OVC must allocate for human trafficking victims, ATEST recommends that additional FTE positions support OVC Human Trafficking grant programs. These newly supported FTEs should be consistent with the percent of increased grant funding. The victims of human trafficking are all genders, adults and children, and include both U.S. citizens and foreign nationals who are victims of sex trafficking and/or forced labor. OVC's current program provides critical services to all of these victim groups in a carefully balanced program as authorized by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (P.L.106- 386).

**Proposed Report Language:** *The bill provides \$140,000,000 for the Victims of Trafficking Grant program, of which no less than \$120,000,000 is for victim services.*

#### **Office of Justice Programs / State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Minor Victim Services Grants: \$10,000,000**

We request \$10,000,000 to support services, training and outreach for labor-trafficked youth. Specialized, comprehensive, trauma-informed and gender specific assistance to minor victims of human trafficking is critical. Minors face significant hurdles recovering from the abuse and trauma they have endured. Law enforcement has identified the lack of specialized housing programs throughout the U.S. as the greatest obstacle in effectively prosecuting child traffickers. The Attorney General is authorized to provide grant funding to serve sex-trafficked minors.

Providing services to labor-trafficked children is imperative given that the federal definition of human trafficking includes both sex trafficking and forced labor. Furthermore, labor trafficking victims experience the same types of trauma, physical, sexual and psychological abuse seen in sex trafficking cases. Often, minors only receive support for sex trafficking recovery.

**Proposed Report Language:** *The bill provides \$10,000,000 for the Minor Victims of Trafficking Grant program, of which \$5,000,000 is for victim services grants for sex-trafficked minors, and \$5,000,000 is for victim services grants for labor-trafficked minors. The Committee encourages DOJ to work in close coordination with the Department of Health and Human Services to encourage collaboration and reduce duplication of effort.*

**Legal Activities / Civil Rights Division, Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit (HTPU):  
\$8,000,000**

HTPU houses the government's top legal experts on prosecuting human trafficking. These cases are resource-intensive because they are procedurally complex and frequently involve multiple jurisdictions and defendants. The 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report indicates that in FY 2021 (the most recent data available), DOJ formally opened 603 human trafficking investigations, initiated 228 human trafficking prosecutions, and secured the convictions of 203 traffickers. Research by the Human Trafficking Institute indicates that defendants in HTPU cases consistently receive longer sentences and are more-frequently ordered to pay restitution than cases handled by other prosecutors. HTPU prosecutions have overwhelmingly focused on sex trafficking, but that is likely to change in FY24, and the unit's caseload is likely to increase. The Abolish Trafficking Reauthorization Act of 2022 (P.L. 117-347 Section 406 (a)) directs the Attorney General to establish a 10-agent team at the FBI to investigate labor trafficking violations. (Appropriations for this unit are covered later in this letter in the section on the FBI). Robust funding for the HTPU will ensure labor trafficking cases receive appropriate prosecution. Additionally, the Abolish Human Trafficking Act (P.L. 115-392) designates an assistant U.S. Attorney in every U.S. Attorney's Office across the United States to prosecute human trafficking cases. HTPU is responsible for supporting the training of these prosecutors.

**Proposed Report Language:** *The Committee provides \$8,000,000 for the Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit (HTPU) and encourages HTPU and the Anti-Trafficking Coordination Teams to continue working with victim service providers and non-governmental organizations to ensure victim needs are prioritized as part of the overall strategy to combat human trafficking and particularly forced labor in the United States. Resources provided are to implement section 15 of P.L. 115-392. Furthermore, the Committee directs the Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit (HTPU) to report to the Committees on Appropriations no later than 120 days following enactment of this Act on (1) the total number of human trafficking cases it prosecuted or assisted in prosecuting within the last three years disaggregated by type of trafficking, (2) the number of Assistant U.S. Attorneys who received training on human trafficking within the past three years, and, (3) the number of Assistant U.S. Attorneys who received training on restitution for human trafficking victims within the past three years.*

**National Institute of Justice / Prevalence Methodology & Study: \$7,000,0000**

We request \$7,000,000 for the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) to conduct research and develop a methodology to assess the prevalence of human trafficking in the United States, as mandated by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2017 (P.L. 115-393 Sec. 401(a)). In February 2023,

NIJ published a call for proposals to conduct this study (Opportunity ID: O-NIJ-2023-171574). Funding will allow NIJ to finally conduct research focused on specific geographies, economic sectors, and different forms of trafficking. For the past several years, the global anti-trafficking community (notably led by civil society organizations and academics) has come to realize that the value of prevalence studies lies in the ability of policymakers and researchers to correlate changes in prevalence to changes in policies and interventions. This is only possible through granular research that assesses different forms of human trafficking among distinct communities. This research is essential to inform future appropriations decisions. Conducting pilot studies that target specific high-prevalence regions, economic sectors, and population groups is a crucial step in developing a comprehensive and accurate nationwide prevalence study. The United States already invests significant resources to measure human trafficking prevalence abroad; it is essential to invest in measuring prevalence domestically if we are to continue as a leader in the global anti-trafficking field.

**Proposed Report Language:** *The Committee provides \$7,000,000 to the National Institute of Justice to conduct a methodology study to assess the prevalence of human trafficking in the United States as mandated by Sec. 401(a) of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2017 (P.L. 115-393).*

**Federal Bureau of Investigation: \$2,000,000**

We request \$2,000,000 for the FBI to establish a team of not less than 10 agents to specialize exclusively in the investigation of labor trafficking violations, as authorized by the Abolish Trafficking Reauthorization Act of 2022 (P.L. 117-347 Section 406 (a)). The FBI is a critical law enforcement partner in fighting human trafficking. The presence of the FBI in trafficking investigations significantly increases the chances of success. Furthermore, with trafficking investigations often crossing state lines, the presence of the FBI becomes critical. Federal law enforcement efforts, however, have focused too heavily on sex trafficking, leaving those trafficked on farms; in factories, restaurants and hotels; at mines and construction sites; and in private homes as domestic and home health care workers without adequate law enforcement protection. The new congressionally-mandated FBI team is a critical step to correct this imbalance.

**Proposed Report Language:** *The Committee provides \$2,000,000 to implement Section 406 (a) of the Abolish Trafficking Reauthorization Act of 2022 (P.L. 117-347), to create a team of not less than 10 FBI agents who specialize exclusively in the investigation of labor trafficking violations. The Committee recognizes the complex nature of human trafficking investigations and encourages the Director to allocate additional resources for human trafficking cases and designate a lead agent in each field office as a point of contact for human trafficking investigations.*

## Legal Activities / United States Attorneys: Report Language

1) Consistent with the reauthorization of the Trafficking Victim Protection Act's requirement that each U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) designate an Assistant U.S. Attorney (AUSA) as a lead human trafficking prosecutor, we request that the subcommittee include report language encouraging the prompt implementation and that the Executive Office of U.S. Attorneys provide sufficient support and training and technical assistance to the designated AUSAs to enable each respective jurisdiction to improve coordination and communication.

**Proposed Report Language:** *The Committee directs the Executive Office of U.S. Attorneys, in consultation with the United States Attorneys, to provide sufficient support and training and technical assistance to each Assistant U.S. Attorney designated as the lead human trafficking prosecutor, consistent with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act.*

2) We request that the Executive Office of U.S. Attorneys, in consultation with the Department of Homeland Security, develop a process to enable survivors with T-visas to obtain an expedited letter of support from the Department of Justice when their criminal case is closed.

**Proposed Report Language:** *Designating a point of contact will improve communication and coordination within each jurisdiction, including victim service organizations, in order to better serve the victims of human trafficking and forced labor. The Committee directs the Executive Office of U.S. Attorneys, in consultation with the Department of Homeland Security, to develop a process to enable survivors with T-visas to obtain an expedited letter of support from the Department of Justice when their criminal case is closed, including a report on sufficient staffing to ensure that requests for letters can be processed in less than 3 months.*

As a champion for the victims of child labor, forced labor and sex trafficking, you understand the complexities of these issues and the resources needed to respond. We have carefully vetted our requests to focus on the most important and effective programs. We thank you for your consideration and your continued leadership. If you have any questions, please contact ATEST Director Terry FitzPatrick ([terry.fitzpatrick@atest-us.org](mailto:terry.fitzpatrick@atest-us.org) or 571-282-9913).

Sincerely,

*Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST)*

*Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW)*

*Covenant House*

*Free the Slaves*

*HEAL Trafficking*

*Human Trafficking Legal Center*  
*Humanity United Action*  
*McCain Institute for International Leadership*  
*National Network for Youth (NN4Y)*  
*Polaris*  
*Safe Horizon*  
*Solidarity Center*  
*United Way Worldwide*  
*Verité*  
*Vital Voices Global Partnership*

*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.*