



March 28, 2023

The Honorable Dave Joyce  
Chair  
House Appropriations Subcommittee  
on Homeland Security

The Honorable Chris Murphy  
Chair  
House Appropriations Subcommittee  
on Homeland Security

The Honorable Henry Cuellar  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Subcommittee  
on Homeland Security

The Honorable Katie Britt  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Subcommittee  
on Homeland Security

Dear Representative Joyce, Representative Cuellar, Senator Murphy, and Senator Britt,

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 appreciate your efforts to pass legislation and provide resources to combat these widespread human rights violations. We seek your assistance in funding essential programs in the FY 2024 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations bill.

DHS plays vital roles in fighting this despicable crime, including responsibilities to safeguard trafficked immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers; to prevent products tainted by child or forced labor from being imported into the U.S. and undercutting American business competitiveness; and to build widespread public awareness through the Blue Campaign. The creation of the new DHS Center to Counter Human Trafficking (CCHT), the beginning of enforcement for the new Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFPLA), and new funding authorizations under the Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Act of 2022 make FY24 a critical year for DHS.

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, international immigration, 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.

### **DHS Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations, Center to Counter Human Trafficking (CCHT), \$200,400,000:**

#### **New Authorization Streams: \$36,000,000**

The 117th Congress created three new funding authorization streams for DHS to combat human trafficking, totaling \$36,000,000.

- The Countering Human Trafficking Act (Public Law 117-322) mandated the consolidation of 16 DHS anti-trafficking programs and staff into the new Center to Counter Human Trafficking (CCHT). The law authorizes \$14,000,000 for the Center, requires minimum staffing of 45 employees, directs the new unit to broaden its historical focus on sex trafficking to include increased attention on forced labor, and instructs CCHT to take a victim-centered approach in programming and modernize its infrastructure.
- The Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Act (TVPPA) of 2022 (Public Law 117-348 section 202) includes a new \$20,000,000 authorization for DHS to fund enforcement of Section 307 of the Tariff Act of 1930 (19 USC 1307) and section 910 of the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015 (P.L. 114-125), which both prohibit the importation into the U.S. of goods produced by child or forced labor.
- The Abolish Trafficking Reauthorization Act of 2022 (Public Law 117-347 section 406 (d)) includes a new \$2,000,000 authorization and mandates that DHS create a team of not less than 10 agents within the new CCHT to exclusively investigate forced labor violations.

In addition to enacting the \$36,000,000 in appropriations for the three new funding authorizations listed above, which we applaud but note are insufficient for DHS to fully accomplish its anti-trafficking obligations mission, ATEST requests that the Committee consider two additional recommendations:

**DHS Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations, Center to Counter Human Trafficking (CCHT), Customs and Border Protection: Tariff Act Enforcement and Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act Enforcement, \$110,000,000:**

We request \$110,000,000 for Customs and Border Protection (CBP) for efforts to fully implement the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (Public Law 117-78) and expand enforcement of Section 307 U.S. Tariff Act. Of that total amount, we request no less than \$20,000,000 be specifically allocated for CBP to enhance its Tariff Act enforcement efforts, including increasing investigations, issuing more Withhold Release Orders (WROs) and Findings, and imposing more civil and criminal penalties for forced labor violations. The funds should be used to hire new analysts for CBP's Forced Labor Division (Office of Trade) and any other CBP personnel as needed to support forced labor investigations. Funding would also support the Forced Labor Division within the Office of Trade to self-initiate investigations of particular types of goods suspected to be produced under conditions of forced labor; provide training to CBP officers and investigatory staff on forced labor; conduct effective investigations within reasonable timelines; publicly disclose WRO enforcement data every quarter; oversee forced labor remediation efforts in consultation with civil society and affected workers; conduct quarterly meetings with civil society groups and other stakeholders; develop new technologies and targeting practices to identify and inspect cargo that may be produced with forced labor; and enhance coordination with counterparts in Canada and Mexico to monitor cross-border movement of such goods.

We continue to see a steady uptick in enforcement actions over recent years. CBP currently lists 53 WROs and 8 Findings in its online dashboard. More than half a billion dollars in tainted imports have been kept out of the U.S. marketplace in recent years. CBP's new online Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act dashboard notes that 229 shipments worth \$15 million have already been denied entry to the U.S., and 974 shipments worth \$290 million are pending action in Fiscal Year 2023 to date. While we appreciate this increased attention by CBP, we also recognize CBP needs additional resources to continue fulfilling its expanding mandate to prevent the importation of goods made by forced labor. The U.S. Government Accountability Office has written several reports highlighting CBP's need for more resources.

**DHS Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations, Center to Counter Human Trafficking (CCHT), Office of Victims Assistance, \$54,400,000:**

We recommend the CCHT establish a formal Office for Victims Assistance to provide national oversight to ensure that all employees of Immigrations and Customs Enforcement comply with all applicable federal laws and policies concerning victim rights, access to information, advisement of legal rights, just and fair treatment of victims, and respect for victims' privacy and dignity; and to oversee and support specially trained victim assistance personnel through guidance, training, travel, technical assistance, and equipment. This office would ensure that requests to DHS for “continued presence” determinations are made fairly and expeditiously to prevent migrants who are trafficking victims from being deported. This office could help ensure that unaccompanied minors at the southern border are properly screened to determine if they are trafficking victims, as required by law. We recommend that \$20,000,000 of these funds be used to hire at least 5 new Victim Witness Coordinators to support victims interacting with law enforcement and ensure that the agency’s response to this crime is centered on helping victims and not solely on arresting perpetrators.

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, and we note that our targeted requests don’t address every aspect of DHS anti-trafficking work. We appreciate that with the many changes underway at DHS regarding trafficking and forced labor, FY24 is an especially challenging appropriations year. We stand ready to help. If you have any questions, please contact ATEST Coalition Director Terry FitzPatrick ([terry.fitzpatrick@ATEST-US.org](mailto:terry.fitzpatrick@ATEST-US.org) or 571-282-9913). We thank you for your consideration and your continued leadership.

Sincerely,

*Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST)*

*Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW)*

*Covenant House*

*Free the Slaves*

*HEAL Trafficking*

*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.*