



March 7, 2024

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 FY25 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, access to health and mental health services, and housing supported by trauma-informed and culturally competent victim service programs 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 ensuring the U.S. government takes a comprehensive, victim-centered approach. Our recommendations are based on levels of programming that can substantively address labor and sex trafficking and support survivors’

paths to self-sufficiency. Because the President's FY25 budget is pending, we may need to update the figures in this letter if necessary.

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 the affordable housing crisis, migration, climate change, ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East. 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.

Summary:

Department of Justice

- Office of Justice Programs: \$152,000,000
- Civil Rights Division Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit: \$8,000,000
- National Institute of Justice Prevalence Methodology Study: \$7,000,000
- Federal Bureau of Investigation: \$2,000,000

Details:

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 FY25. Since the National Human Trafficking Hotline's inception in 2007, which maintains a nationwide database of service providers for victims, the call volume to the hotline has increased more than thirty-fold. In the past four years alone, total signal volume to the Trafficking Hotline increased 40 percent over the first 12 years of the Trafficking Hotline's operation with significant increases in mental health crisis calls, requests for emergency shelter, and need for legal assistance. While some of these growing requests could be met, victim service-oriented NGOs had to devote already strained resources to advocating with landlords, medical and other service providers to accept lower rent and medical bill payments because funding was insufficient to cover and/or subsidize 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, 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 (not sure if this could be rewritten or adjusted to capture wage theft as well (from prior victimization), lack of educational opportunities, and other inequities. We request that OVC review existing law enforcement task force grants to ensure these groups have sufficient resources to adopt and implement victim-centered approaches. The funding is also crucial to building and deepening relationships between the victim service providers and law enforcement officials within the task forces.

We also request that funding for victim services grant programs at DOJ remain within the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC). OVC has efficiently and effectively administered 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 existing OVC Human Trafficking grant programs. These newly supported FTEs should be consistent with the percentage of increased grant funding. 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 helps ensure the continuing delivery of critical services to all 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: \$12,000,000

We request \$12,000,000 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 in 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 and 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 \$12,000,000 for the Minor Victims of Trafficking Grant program, of which \$6,000,000 is for victim services grants for sex-trafficked minors, and \$6,000,000 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 Global Law Enforcement Data indicates that in FY 2021, there were 90,354 victims identified, 10,572 prosecutions, and 5,260 convictions, of which 21,219 were labor trafficking victims, 1,379 labor trafficking prosecutions, and 374 labor trafficking convictions.¹ In FY 2021, DOJ formally opened 603 human trafficking investigations, of which 577 involved predominantly sex trafficking and 26 involved predominantly labor trafficking, and resulted in 203 human trafficking-related convictions.²

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, 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 within 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) provides that the Attorney General designates at least one Assistant U.S. Attorney as a Human Trafficking Justice Coordinator in each Federal judicial district who works with a human trafficking witness specialist to assist with the national strategy, conduct public outreach and awareness, prosecute, ensure collection of data, build partnerships, and encourage the collection of restitution for human trafficking victims. HTPU is responsible for supporting the ongoing training of these prosecutors.

¹ U.S. Department of State Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons. *Trafficking in Persons Report*. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/> (accessed August 15, 2023).

² *Id.*

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 continue research and develop methodologies 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)). Funding will allow NIJ to continue 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 realized 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 targeting specific high-prevalence regions, economic sectors, and population groups is crucial 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 ten 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 congressionally-mandated FBI labor trafficking 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 ongoing 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 implement 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 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 forced labor, human trafficking and modern slavery around the world.