



**To:** House & Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Homeland Security  
**From:** Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking (ATEST)  
**Date:** March 20, 2026  
**Re:** FY27 Recommendations for Anti-trafficking Programs

The Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking (ATEST) thanks you for your leadership in the fight to end forced labor and human trafficking. We are grateful for the support these programs have received for more than 25 years, when Congress first passed the blueprint for America's anti-trafficking response, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

Human trafficking is one of the fastest-growing criminal industries in the world, affecting 28 million people and generating more than \$236 billion in annual illicit profits. It is more than a criminal justice issue, it affects America's economy, workforce and national security. We can eradicate trafficking only by dedicating the necessary resources. The Department of Homeland Security plays a vital role, as detailed below.

This memo provides concrete recommendations from ATEST, a nonpartisan coalition of leading anti-trafficking organizations working throughout the United States and around the world. ATEST urges Congress to hold the line in FY27 by appropriating not less than the amounts enacted for FY25, and approve increases where possible to meet actual need. As we submit this memo, FY26 DHS appropriation levels are pending; we stand ready to assist the committee moving forward with updated recommendations if needed.

**Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations, Center for Countering Human Trafficking (CCHT):** The Center for Countering Human Trafficking (CCHT) mandate includes multiple pillars to integrate and coordinate the anti-trafficking efforts of 16 DHS component agencies: drive criminal human trafficking investigations, improve victim identification and protection, incorporate victim-centered approaches, strengthen trade enforcement against trafficking-tainted goods, and assist the implementation of procurement restrictions to prevent U.S. tax funds being used to pay for trafficking-tainted goods. The Countering Human Trafficking Act (Public Law 117-322), which codified the CCHT, authorizes \$14,000,000 for the Center, requires minimum staffing of 45 employees, and directs DHS to broaden its historical focus on sex trafficking to include increased attention on forced labor. The Abolish Trafficking Reauthorization Act of 2022 (Public Law 117-347 section 406 (d)) includes an additional \$2,000,000 authorization and mandates that DHS create a team of not less than 10 agents within CCHT to exclusively investigate forced labor violations.

**Customs and Border Protection, forced labor import ban enforcement:** To promote global human rights and to protect American companies from unfair competition by unscrupulous overseas businesses, DHS has been mandated by Congress to enforce several initiatives to prevent goods tainted by forced or child labor from being imported into the U.S. The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (Public Law 117-78) bans the importation of tainted goods from portions of China. 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), both prohibit the importation into the U.S. of goods produced throughout the world by child or forced labor.

ATEST recommends an appropriation of not less than \$130,000,000 for DHS forced labor trade enforcement. This would support ongoing investigations for the “entities” list that publicly identifies importers of Chinese goods prohibited from the U.S. marketplace under the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, including extensive interagency consultations among seven executive branch agencies needed for the operation of the Forced Labor Enforcement Task Force, which DHS leads. It would also include increasing investigations, issuing more Withhold Release Orders and Findings, and imposing more civil and criminal penalties for forced labor violations of the Tariff Act, which covers imports from other countries. The funds should be used to hire analysts for CBP's Forced Labor Division (Office of Trade) and any other CBP personnel 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 trade 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. The Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Act (TVPPA) of 2022 (Public Law 117-348 section 202) includes a \$20,000,000 authorization for DHS to fund enforcement of the Tariff Act and Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act.

The Department of Homeland Security’s quarterly stakeholder briefings for civil society organizations on enforcement of the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act and Tariff Act Withhold Release Order authority ended abruptly in 2025. These quarterly briefings had been valuable opportunities for Forced Labor Enforcement Task Force agencies to hear from nonprofit organizations, and to communicate progress made by the agencies in blocking the importation of goods tainted by forced labor. Ending these briefings is a reduction in effort by the government in combating trafficking. ATEST urges the committee to include in report language that DHS prioritize the meaningful resumption and institutionalization of regular civil society engagement.

**Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations, Victim Assistance Program:** DHS has established a program to provide national oversight to ensure that all employees 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 program ensures that requests to DHS for "continued presence" determinations and T-Visa applications are made fairly and expeditiously to prevent migrants who are trafficking victims from being deported. This office helps ensure that unaccompanied minors at the southern border are properly screened to determine if they are trafficking victims, as required by law. ATEST recommends no less than \$54,400,000 in FY27 funding, with \$20,000,000 dedicated to Victim Witness Coordinators who support victim interactions with law enforcement and ensure that the agency's response to this crime is centered on helping victims and not solely on arresting perpetrators.

ATEST urges the committee to include report language directing DHS to strengthen training and monitoring procedures to ensure forced labor does not occur inside immigration detention facilities run by private contractors, as is mandated by the Federal Acquisition Regulation (which prohibits the use of federal tax dollars to procure goods or services tainted by human trafficking, forced labor or child labor). The need for such guidance from Congress is urgent, as demonstrated by a 2026 Supreme Court ruling. A DHS contractor had asked the court to block a suit by forced labor victims held in the company's private immigration detention facility, an allegation of forced labor committed with taxpayer funds, arguing that ICE contractors enjoy immunity because they are agents of the government. The court [rejected](#) the argument and has allowed a trial in the case to proceed.

As a champion for the victims of trafficking, you understand the complexities of these issues and the resources needed to respond. 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).