City of Philadelphia

City Council
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10/10/2023	0	Committee on Children and Youth	HEARING NOTICES SENT		
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9/28/2023	0	CITY COUNCIL			

Authorizing the Council Committee on Children and Youth to hold public hearings examining the response to human trafficking in the City of Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, It is incumbent upon the Council of the City of Philadelphia to ensure relevant government entities are prioritizing the safety of children; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services (DBHIDS) defines human trafficking as a form of modern-day slavery that occurs both within the United States and around the world; and

WHEREAS, According to DBHIDS, sex trafficking generates $99 billion a year, with 4.5 million people forced into sexual exploitation. Similarly, labor trafficking generates $51 billion a year, with 21 million people across the world falling prey to labor traffickers; and

WHEREAS, One in six runaways are likely to become victims of sex trafficking; and

WHEREAS, In February of 2023, the Philadelphia Inquirer reported that eight women between the ages of 14 and 17 were forced into prostitution at the Days Inn on the Roosevelt Boulevard; and

WHEREAS, After surviving the horrors of trafficking, individuals are often stigmatized by cultural and societal biases. Their victimization and subsequent societal devaluation may lead them to experience extreme poverty, public shame, and being prohibited from marrying, as well as the potential for re-exploitation. Cultural barriers to survivor inclusion and empowerment may stem from several factors that limit the safety, rights, and economic freedom of marginalized individuals and communities; and

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WHEREAS, These factors, among others, may prevent survivors from publicly identifying because it would lead to increased marginalization or other negative repercussions, such as being criminalized rather than identified as a victim; and

WHEREAS, Regardless of the circumstances that led an individual to being trafficked, the impact of cultural barriers remains constant: shame and embarrassment that prevent a victim from receiving the services and support needed to permanently escape and rebuild a healthy and secure life; and

WHEREAS, There are many grassroots advocates fighting human trafficking, including the Salvation Army's New Day Drop In Center, which provides sustainable care to those fleeing the life of human trafficking, along with meeting their immediate needs like shelter, transportation, clothing and food, answering victims' physical and psychological trauma with a portfolio of services. Survivors also turn to She's My Sister, a human trafficking awareness ministry at Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church. They engage in prayer, advocacy, awareness, and outreach to combat the horrific crime against humanity that is human trafficking. The Philadelphia Children's Alliance is a crucial partner as well, making sure that every child still has access to the full constellation of services including medical and mental health treatment, along with their forensic interviews; and

WHEREAS, Grassroots advocacy starts with the individual, and Edwin Desamour exemplifies this through his work with The Exodus Road, a global nonprofit that partners with law enforcement to fight human trafficking crime, equips communities to protect the vulnerable and empowers survivors as they walk into freedom; and

WHEREAS, In the United States, individuals vulnerable to human trafficking include children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, including foster care; runaway and homeless youth; unaccompanied foreign national children without lawful immigration status; individuals seeking asylum; American Indians and Alaska Natives, particularly women and girls; individuals with substance use issues; racial or ethnic minorities; migrant laborers, including undocumented workers and participants in visa programs for temporary workers; foreign national domestic workers in diplomatic households; persons with limited English proficiency; persons with disabilities; LGBTQI+ individuals; and victims of intimate partner violence or other forms of domestic violence; and

WHEREAS, At the heart of this phenomenon is the traffickers' aim to profit. The exploitation of their victims and the myriad coercive and deceptive practices they use to do so are a means to an end. Traffickers can be strangers, acquaintances, or even family members. They prey on the vulnerable and on those seeking opportunities to build for themselves a brighter future; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby authorizes the Council Committee on Children and Youth to hold public hearings examining the response to human trafficking in the City of Philadelphia.

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