



Legislation Text

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Recognizing January as “National Human Trafficking Awareness Month” in the City of Philadelphia and honoring those who work to eradicate human trafficking in the United States and across the world.

WHEREAS, While slavery may have been abolished in America in the 19th Century through the 14th Amendment, human trafficking, an insidious form of modern-day slavery, appallingly persists in Philadelphia and in the United States well into the 21st Century; and

WHEREAS, The National Human Trafficking Hotline reports that there have been more than 1,000 documented cases of human trafficking in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania since 2007, with over 2,500 total victims caught up in those cases. While statistics are incomplete for 2018, Pennsylvania saw 127 cases reported through the end of June alone; and

WHEREAS, According to the Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services, victims of human trafficking are subjected to force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of commercial sex, debt bondage, or forced labor. Human trafficking is an issue that affects people of all ages, gender identities, and races alike; and

WHEREAS, Human traffickers use many physical and psychological techniques to control their victims, including the use of violence or threats of violence against the victim or the victim’s family, isolation from the public, isolation from the victim’s family and religious or ethnic communities, language and cultural barriers, shame, control of the victim’s possessions, confiscation of passports and other identification documents and threats of arrest, deportation, or imprisonment if the victim attempts to reach out for assistance or leave; and

WHEREAS, It is a moral imperative to eliminate human trafficking, including early or forced marriage, commercial sexual exploitation, forced labor, labor obtained through debt bondage, involuntary servitude, slavery, and slavery by descent; and

WHEREAS, Combatting human trafficking in Philadelphia requires its people to be aware of the realities of this contemporary manifestation of slavery. Furthermore, those victimized by human trafficking require community support in order to escape from bondage or servitude and to recover from the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual trauma brought on by their oppression; and

WHEREAS, Although laws to prosecute perpetrators of human trafficking and to assist and protect those victimized by it have been enacted in the United States, awareness of the issues surrounding human trafficking is essential for effective enforcement as the techniques that traffickers use to keep their victims enslaved severely limit self-reporting; and

WHEREAS, The efforts on the parts of individuals, businesses, organizations and governing bodies to promote the observance of “National Human Trafficking Awareness Month” in January of each year represents the ongoing commitment to raise awareness of and actively oppose human trafficking; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Commission for Women, for example, observed National Human Trafficking Awareness Day on January 11, 2019 by launching a personal care item drive benefiting survivors of human trafficking. With a theme of “New Year, New Hope,” this is the third consecutive year that the Commission for Women has put on the collection drive. All collected items will go to the Hope Bag Mission, which distributes emergency supplies to social service agencies that care for women and girls who have experienced human trafficking; and

WHEREAS, In announcing the Drive, Jovida Hill, Executive Director for the Philadelphia Commission for Women said that, “Human trafficking is a scourge on our City and our society. We must remain committed to abolishing this heinous act of exploitation often enacted among our most vulnerable residents, specifically our youth, our LGBTQ community, and immigrants. We must work together to remain steadfast abolitionists and continue to fight for justice for human trafficking survivors every day” ; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia has traditionally prided itself on being the birthplace of American liberty. While we recognize now that this liberty was woefully incomplete prior to the abolition of slavery, human trafficking has escaped the attention of many Philadelphians who proudly champion the cause of freedom. It is time that this lack of awareness came to an end; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby recognize January as “National Human Trafficking Awareness Month” and honor those who work to eradicate human trafficking in the United States and across the world.