



SISTERS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD  
**NATIONAL ADVOCACY CENTER**  
*Rise Up AND Act for Justice*

---

**For Immediate Release:** July 1, 2019

## **Capitol Hill Conference on Human Trafficking - Now I have Purpose *Get educated. Get hope. Get going.***

[Photos available]

Capitol Hill staffers, religious sisters and advocates packed a congressional meeting room in June to learn from experts on human trafficking, survivors/self-advocates and Congresswoman Ann Wagner (R-MO) on the dangers of human trafficking and some solutions and ways to help.

Sr. Winifred Doherty, RGS, United Nations Representative for the Good Shepherd Congregation, used Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* as a launching point to discuss human ecology and our relationships with one another. Our society, she said, sees "humans as objects. We encounter the other as objects to be commercialized and used. ... And we are all diminished" for it.

Sr. Winifred continued that "*Laudato Si'* connects the dots [of environmental degradation] and mostly those living in poverty ... of people deemed unwanted. ... They are the very persons who are trafficked and exploited."

She called on everyone to live mindfully, accept the other and separate the person from the action, in particular referring to who have been prostituted and trafficked.

Last year, Rep. Wagner sponsored the FOSTA law (Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act) which shutdown BackPage and has had deterrent effects on Reddit, Google and other sites. These sites have updated their terms of service and seen large reductions in purchasing of women and children. Indeed, buyers are complaining that purchase prices have increased due to decreased supply. The Congresswoman said that there has been a 50% year-over-year decline in responses to online advertisements. "If it is a crime off-line, it is a crime on-line," said Rep. Wagner.

Lt. Sarah Krebs of the Missing Persons Coordination Unit within the Special Investigations Division of the Michigan State Police said that, in Michigan, 1,000 minors go missing every week, most voluntarily. She said law enforcement and the broader community can no longer look at missing children as "just a runaway," because runaways are in vulnerable positions and one in seven are approached for sex trafficking.

Twenty year old Bailey said that "through the internet, it is easy to become trafficked" for sex. She is a survivor and benefited from Michigan's treatment program leading her to Vista Maria, a Good Shepherd residential treatment facility for youth. Bailey, whose last name we are not using, called for more funding of treatment programs saying that "without long-term treatment, I wouldn't be here today. ... Now I have purpose. My future is very promising."

After the formal panels and discussions, attendees learned about two pieces of legislation and then went to meet with their Members of Congress to urge support and passage of the bills.

Last year, Savanna's Act passed the Senate but not the House. This year, S. 227 was introduced almost immediately after the new session of Congress began in January by Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and has 22 co-sponsors with support from both Democrats and Republicans. The legislation has been referred to the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, which held a hearing on the bill on June 19, 2019.

Its House companion bill, H.R. 2733, was introduced by Representative Norma Torres (D-CA) and has been referred to two committees: House Judiciary Committee and House Committee on Natural Resources. It also has bi-partisan support with 28 co-sponsors.

The legislation focuses on improved coordination (between federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement), reporting, and prosecution for crimes related to missing and murdered Native Americans.

The other legislation advocated by attendees was H.R. 2836, Central American Women and Children Protection Act of 2019, introduced in May in a bipartisan manner by Representatives Norma Torres (D-CA) and Ann Wagner (R-MO) and has been referred to the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Its companion bill, S. 1781, was introduced in June by Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) and already has 6 co-sponsors with support from both Democrats and Republicans. The legislation has been referred to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for further action.

H.R. 2836 / S. 1781 would authorize appropriations for the Department of State for the next three years to provide assistance to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras (the "Northern Triangle of Central America") to increase protection of women and children in their homes and communities and reduce female homicides, domestic violence, and sexual assault. No funds would go directly to the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala or Honduras and options to suspend all funding are provided.

*[The National Advocacy Center](#) educates and advocates on social justice issues for the transformation of society to the benefit of all people reflecting the spirituality, history and mission of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. NAC advocates at the Federal level for people living in poverty, immigrants, survivors of human trafficking, survivors of domestic abuse, and other vulnerable populations.*

*The Sisters of the Good Shepherd was founded in France in 1835 and are in over 70 countries on 5 continents and have had a presence in the United States for over 175 years. With a presence in 22 states and 1 U. S. Territory, the Sisters and their Lay Mission Partners have dedicated themselves to serving girls, women and families who experience poverty, exploitation, vulnerability and marginalization.*