



# **USCSAHT Hill Day**

## **October 22, 2019**

# **Legislator Packet**



“

*Human trafficking is an open wound  
on the body of contemporary society,  
a scourge upon the body of Christ.  
It is a crime against humanity.*

---

Pope Francis



## We Envision a World Without Slavery

U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking (USCSAHT) is a collaborative, faith-based national network that offers education, supports access to survivor services, and engages in advocacy to eradicate modern-day slavery. We work to *inform* the public, *prevent* this assault on human dignity, and *assist* survivors to live fulfilling lives.

Our members include 100+ congregations of Catholic Sisters, coalitions working against human trafficking and individuals who share our mission. *Ending slavery is everyone's work!*

USCSAHT is the U.S. representative to *Talitha Kum*, the International Network of Consecrated Life Against Trafficking in Persons. *Talitha Kum* members are 43 national networks representing 77 countries—tens of thousands of sisters working throughout the world to end trafficking and support survivors.





# A Holistic Approach to Ending Human Trafficking

Recognizing there are many factors that perpetuate this form of modern day slavery, USCSAHT embraces an intersectional approach in our work to end human trafficking and support survivors. In our educational and advocacy efforts we work to prevent further victims of trafficking by addressing root causes such as poverty, racism, sexism, foreign and domestic policy, environmental destruction, violence, and trauma. In our work with survivors we support and encourage their holistic wellness and healing of body, mind, and soul.

## Facts About Human Trafficking

- The Intl. Labour Organization estimates that there are over 21 million victims of human trafficking globally. Other estimates range as high as 45 million victims.<sup>1</sup>
- One in four victims of human trafficking is a child.<sup>2</sup>
- Women and children comprise 71% of human trafficking victims.<sup>3</sup>

- Although there is no official estimate of the total number of victims in the U.S., the National Hotline has documented cases of human trafficking in all 50 states. Calls and text to the Hotline indicate hundreds of thousands of victims of both sex and labor trafficking in our country.<sup>4</sup>

1. 2016 Global Slavery Index 2. UN Office on Drugs and Crime  
3. 2016 UNODC Report on Trafficking in Persons 4. [www.polarisproject.org](http://www.polarisproject.org)



## How You Can Help

Please visit our resource-rich website at [www.sistersagainsttrafficking.org/help](http://www.sistersagainsttrafficking.org/help) to find out how you can get involved. Donate! Join Us! Learn more about Human Trafficking! Pray for Us! Advocate for Victims! Follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

Learn more at: [www.sistersagainsttrafficking.org](http://www.sistersagainsttrafficking.org)



**U.S. Catholic Sisters  
Against Human Trafficking**

*Ending Slavery Is Everyone's Work*

# Statement of Core Values

---

U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking is a collaborative, faith-based national network that offers education, supports access to survivor services, and engages in advocacy in an effort to eradicate modern-day slavery.

Our advocacy efforts reflect the core values of our faith:

- Belief in the inherent dignity of every human person;
- Commitment to those who are poor and vulnerable;
- Establishment of right relationships to promote the common good;
- Defense of the basic rights of workers
- Solidarity with one another and the willingness to enter into another's joys and sorrows.

We challenge our policymakers and elected officials to consider these values in all they do and invite all people who share these values to join us in our work.



**U.S. Catholic Sisters  
Against Human Trafficking**

*Ending Slavery Is Everyone's Work*

# Advocacy Priorities 116<sup>th</sup> Congress

## Transform unjust policies

Policies and practices that harm survivors of human trafficking or threaten migrants or others who are vulnerable to human trafficking must be exposed and rejected.

## Demand survivor informed policy

Persons who have been trafficked should have the opportunity to provide advice and recommendations to legislators and policy makers in order to improve U.S. policy and programming efforts.

## Address root causes

Governments and nongovernmental organization must be encouraged to adopt a human rights-based approach to human trafficking that addresses the roots causes of trafficking and the exploitation of women and men and girls and boys.

## Invest in girls and women

The U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development must be encouraged to promote programs that build the capacity of countries' national and local legal and policy frameworks to prevent discrimination against girls and women, guarantee their access to quality engendered education, and secure their property, social security, land tenure, and inheritance rights.

## Require business transparency

Corporations must be held accountable for any forced or child labor in their labor recruitment and hiring and in their supply and distribution chains. Businesses should be required to publicly disclose their efforts to eliminate human trafficking and child labor in their business operations.



## The Nexus Between Migration and Human Trafficking

United States Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking, a collaborative, faith-based national network that works to eradicate modern-day slavery, deplores the increase in human trafficking in the United States and around the world, some of which results from forced migration and our failed national refugee and immigration policies.

New immigrants may be susceptible to trafficking because of their precarious social and economic circumstances. Undocumented immigrants are at even greater risk because they live in constant fear of apprehension, detention, and deportation. Increased immigration enforcement only serves to push immigrants further into the shadows and gives a chilling advantage to traffickers who use people's immigration status as a tool to exploit their labor or coerce them into participating in the sex trade.

President Trump's decision to drastically decrease refugee admissions places these children, women, and men, already among the most vulnerable and desperate people on earth, at even greater risk of forced labor and human trafficking.

Unfortunately, at a time when a record number of people are on the move--forced from their homes by violence of all kinds including poverty, armed conflict, abuse, and persecution, the United States is woefully unprepared to deal with the threat of human trafficking. To date, many positions in the State Department which aid in anti-trafficking efforts both in the United States and internationally are not filled. The administration's plans to defund international agencies, including UNICEF, the Bureau of International Labor Affairs, and the World Food Program that support people on the move and federal programs housed in the U.S. Department of State and the Justice Department undercut anti-trafficking efforts and feed into the hands of those who seek to exploit migrants and refugees.

We call on faith leaders, members of the Trump Administration, and our legislators in Congress to insist that our nation "welcome the stranger" and care for those seeking refuge. We demand that our national policies, programs, and laws uphold the dignity of all human beings and seek to end the trafficking of children, women, and men who are all God's children made in God's image and likeness.

## Central American Women and Children Protection Act S. 1781



***We ask you to Support and Co-Sponsor the Central American Women and Children Protection Act of 2019, and we urge inclusion of a Congressional finding on the human trafficking of Central American women and children.***

### Background

[S. 1781](#) was introduced in June by Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) and already has six co-sponsors with support from both Democrats and Republicans. The legislation has been referred to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for further action.

The companion bill H.R. 2836 was introduced in May by Representatives Norma Torres (D-CA) and Ann Wagner (R-MO). It was passed by the House of Representatives as an amendment to H.R. 2615 *United States-Northern Triangle Enhanced Engagement Act*.

The legislation would authorize appropriations for the Department of State for the next three years to provide assistance to the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras 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. Funds will be provided to a recipient entity.

### The bill would:

- Authorize the U.S. Secretary of State to enter into bilateral “Women and Children Protection Compacts” with the three Northern Triangle countries to establish plans that would:
  - Strengthen their criminal justice systems and civil protection courts to protect women and children and serve victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse and neglect and hold perpetrators accountable;
  - Create and sustain safe communities to prevent and deter violence against women and children;
  - Ensure schools are safe and promote prevention and early detection of gender-based and domestic abuse within communities; and
  - Provide security within the region to families and unaccompanied children fleeing domestic, gang, or drug violence.
- Provide \$20,000,000 (House bill) or \$10,000,000 (Senate bill) each of three years (2020, 2021, 2022) to carry out the plans outlined above if the countries enter into the Compacts.
- Require reporting to Congress, including on the implementation of the compacts and information on gender-based violence, child welfare systems for unaccompanied children, violence against children, and the capacity of police, prosecution services to combat violence against women and children in the countries.

## **Why We Support this Legislation**

This bill addresses the threats to many women and children in the Northern Triangle who, because of failed or illegitimate states, are frequent victims of lawlessness and violence.

We are particularly concerned about the vulnerability of the people in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras who are living in violence and fear, in sickness and hunger, without employment and without many options.

This vulnerability often leads to exploitation of all kinds, including labor and sex trafficking, particularly for those who are forced to flee their homes in search of safety.

The Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala have among the highest homicide rates in the world. In 2017, there were 60 homicides per 100,000 people in El Salvador, 43.6 homicides per 100,000 people in Honduras, and 26.1 homicides per 100,000 people in Guatemala.

Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador are characterized by a high prevalence of drug- and gang-related violence, murder, and crimes involving gender-based violence. The region also has high rates of domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual assault.

Central America ranks high among regions of the world for female homicides. A combined 801 women were victims of homicide in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala in 2017 alone, according to the United Nations Office of Drug Control and Crime.

El Salvador and Honduras are both among the top 3 countries in the world with the highest child homicides rates, with more than 22 and 32 deaths per 100,000 children respectively, according to the nongovernmental organization Save the Children.

Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador governments allow impunity for perpetrators of violence against women and children, with less than 10 percent of reported cases resulting in conviction.

This bill will help address some of these protection concerns in the region.

**We also encourage inclusion of a Congressional finding in Section 2** of the bill to highlight the vulnerability to trafficking of Central American women and children, particularly those forced to flee their homes. The [United Nations High Commission for Refugees](#) and nongovernmental organizations have clearly documented these vulnerabilities.

## **Contact**

Jennifer Reyes Lay, Executive Director, U.S. Catholic Sisters against Human Trafficking,  
[Jennifer@sistersagainsttrafficking.org](mailto:Jennifer@sistersagainsttrafficking.org), 267-332-7768.

## **Child Trafficking Victims Protection and Welfare Act of 2019—S. 661/H.R. 3729**



***We ask you to Support and Co-Sponsor Child Trafficking Victims Protection and Welfare Act of 2019—S. 661/H.R. 3729***

[S. 661](#) was introduced in March by Mazie Hirono (D-HI) and currently has 14 co-sponsors. The legislation has been referred to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for further action. The companion bill, [H.R. 3729](#) was introduced in July by Representative Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA).

The legislation would expand protections to vulnerable migrant children while they are in the custody of Customs and Border Protection (CBP). The bill would:

1. Require Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to consult with experts in child welfare, development, and health;
2. Develop guidelines for the treatment of children in its custody;
3. Require licensed child welfare professionals to be available at certain ports of entry or Border Patrol stations. Such experts will be able to identify victims of trafficking and ensure they receive adequate care while in CBP custody.
4. Require all children in CBP custody to be provided with basic necessities, including a safe, sanitary, and climate-appropriate living environment, adequate nutrition, potable water, educational materials, and recreational activities.
5. Create provisions to prevent family separation and to assist the Departments of Homeland Security and Health and Human Services in reuniting separated families.
6. Establish a program that ensures the safe repatriation and reintegration of children who return to their country of nationality or last habitual residence, to help ensure these children are not placed back into the hands of traffickers.

Many children in CBP custody have endured long and traumatic journeys to the United States, and we must ensure that CBP's care does not inflict further trauma on these children.

Dangerous overcrowding, as well as the unsanitary conditions at immigrant detention centers run by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and its Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agency have been documented by the agency's Inspector General.

We condemn the deplorable conditions and inhumane treatment of immigrant children by our own government. It is not only a violation of human dignity and rights, but also contrary to religious teachings and the sacred call to care for all people, especially those most at risk. The deaths of children because of government neglect in detention demands our attention and our faith compels us to speak out in defense of children who continue to experience terrible, harmful conditions while in the custody of the U.S. government.

### **Contact**

Jennifer Reyes Lay, Executive Director, U.S. Catholic Sisters against Human Trafficking,  
[Jennifer@sistersagainsttrafficking.org](mailto:Jennifer@sistersagainsttrafficking.org), 267-332-7768.