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Congress Can Break the Link Between Human Trafficking, Forced Migration

Washington D.C., Dec 1 – The United States is founded on concepts of human dignity and freedom. Human trafficking is the antithesis of these beloved ideals and two national anti-trafficking organizations are challenging Congress to hammer away at the industry of human trafficking, and in particular to break the link between human trafficking and forced migration.

Vulnerable people in poor countries and crumbling societies are being forced from their homes in search of a safe life, which ironically can increase their vulnerability to human trafficking.

The [Alliance to End Human Trafficking](#), formerly U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking, and the [National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd](#) have joined together to advocate a three-pronged legislative effort focusing on root causes, work permits and unaccompanied children.

The Alliance to End Human Trafficking and the National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd are pleased to endorse [H.R. 6145](#) / [S. 3178](#), the Immigration Court Efficiency and Children’s Court Act, a common-sense proposal that would make meaningful progress in improving immigration proceedings for unaccompanied children and be a formal process to reduce human trafficking. This bill would assist and protect unaccompanied children, including those in need of protection from trafficking, as they navigate the complex U.S. immigration system.

“Unaccompanied children in the United States are defenseless and at high risk of being trafficked,” said AEHT Executive Director Katie Boller-Gosewisch. “The Immigration Court Efficiency and Children’s Court Act is needed to protect children, so they are afforded child-centered representation and due process to ensure they are given a fair chance at a better life. This is something we should want for all our children – domestic or foreign-born.”

In addition to protecting unaccompanied children, AEHT and NAC call on Congress to reduce delays in work permits for asylum applicants who are at risk of human trafficking. The Asylum Seeker Work Authorization Act, [H.R. 1325](#), would direct the Secretary of Homeland Security to provide employment authorization for asylum applicants (provided they are not in detention and the application is not determined “frivolous”) 30 days after their filing of the asylum application. The inability to work leaves people vulnerable to exploitation, and H.R. 1325 would enable asylum applicants to get to work and sustain themselves and their families.

“America is known as the land of opportunity. Asylum seekers have fled fear, starvation, violence, and death threats. Once safe in our country, many remain at risk of human trafficking and abuse. Employment offers them security and a way to support themselves and their families. Asylum seekers seek safety. And they seek opportunity. They seek work and independence. However, our antiquated system shuts them out of the workforce for months at a time. H.R. 1325 would reduce the wait time of asylum seekers and would reduce unnecessary paperwork for businesses and individuals along with eliminating additional bureaucracy and red tape,” said Fran Eskin-Royer, Executive Director of the National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd.

“While all people enjoy the right to migrate in search of safety and security, they also have the right to remain in their home countries living with dignity,” said Eskin-Royer. The final and crucial focus area for AEHT and NAC is the reauthorization of the International Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2023 ([S. 920](#)) and the Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2023 ([H.R. 5856](#)), in particular the inclusion of provisions that address the root causes of forced migration.

AEHT and NAC will advocate for the inclusion of provisions that provide:

- U.S. aid for sustainable development and humanitarian assistance that provides support for food security, housing, employment, education and healthcare in local communities;
- Support for both internally displaced persons and refugees that enables them to avoid undertaking the treacherous journey to the United States; and
- Financial support to non-governmental organizations that seeks to enable people to remain in their home countries in safety and to broaden the network of care for those in dangerous circumstances.

“Our goal is to address the root causes of forced migration and human trafficking,” said Boller-Gosewisch. “At a time, when we are seeing an influx in migration due to political

instability, natural disasters, famine, war, violence, poverty, and organized crime, the provisions we are advocating for in the TVPRA are vital in addressing these root causes and allowing those who are most vulnerable the resources they need to lead a life of basic human dignity.”

According to Eskin-Royer, the United States’ identity is inextricably bound to the idea of offering safe haven to those needing protection and those seeking refuge and a better life. “If we are to live up to this ideal, we must do what is ours to do and reduce these particular vulnerabilities to human trafficking which is the antithesis of safety,” she said. “We must find ways to give immigrants and asylum seekers stronger footing - be it through faster access to work permits, better protections for unaccompanied children, or supporting their development and dignity in their home countries. In the 118th Congress, NAC and the Alliance are advocating for bipartisan legislative solutions that better protect immigrants from traffickers and increase their security and freedom.”

For more information on the nexus between human trafficking and forced migration, visit bit.ly/3CcdUYn to find resources and to view our summer webinar.

Alliance to End Human Trafficking was founded in 2013 by a group of Catholic Sisters committed to ending human trafficking and supporting survivors. They created a national network of resources and support that includes many different congregations of women religious and mission-aligned partners. Today, this member-based organization has grown to include more than 115 congregations and another 100+ individuals and organizations spread throughout the United States. AEHT is also the U.S. member of Talitha Kum, the international network of consecrated life working to end human trafficking.

The National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd 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. NAC reflects the spirituality, history and mission of the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd (better known as the Sisters of the Good Shepherd). The sisters and their agencies work in solidarity with the disenfranchised – particularly families, women and children – who often are forgotten, left-behind or dismissed.

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