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## **Anti-Trafficking Groups Applaud Introduction of Children’s Court Bill & Push Congress To Additional Action Preventing Human Trafficking Rooted in Forced Migration**

**Washington D.C., Nov. 1** – Ending human trafficking is a heavy lift; we must look to what is ours to do. In this time of world-wide strife, vulnerable people are being forced from their homes, communities and countries, which ironically can increase their vulnerability: their vulnerability to human trafficking.

Two national anti-trafficking organizations have joined together to break the link between human trafficking and forced migration through a three-pronged legislative effort focusing on root causes, work permits and unaccompanied children.

The [Alliance to End Human Trafficking](#) (AEHT), formerly U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking, and the [National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd](#) (NAC) are pleased to endorse the Immigration Court Efficiency and Children’s Court Act, a common-sense proposal introduced today in the United States Congress that would make meaningful progress in improving immigration proceedings for unaccompanied children and be a formal process to combat human trafficking. Unaccompanied children in the United States are defenseless and at high risk of being trafficked. We are deeply grateful to Senators Bennet and Murkowski and Representatives Goldman, Salazar, Scholten and Chavez-DeRemer for putting forward this bill for the children.

Next week, on November 6, leaders from AEHT and NAC will meet with Members of Congress and staff to highlight the link between human trafficking and forced migration and to seek support for their multifaceted approach by addressing root causes of forced migration, reducing delays in work permits for asylum applicants, and protecting unaccompanied children.

“Our team and partners spent a great deal of time this summer and fall discussing possible policy and legislative options to mitigate the risk of human trafficking faced by migrants. These three options, the special docket for children, rapid work authorization for asylees, and provisions in legislation that both support displaced persons and improve conditions so that migration isn’t necessary, are very promising actions that support and promote the dignity of all,” said AEHT Executive Director Katie Boller-Gosewisch.

Over the course of the next several months AEHT and NAC will be advocating for:

- Inclusion of provisions in both 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](#)) that address the root causes of forced migration. 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. We 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.
- Rapid work authorizations for asylum seekers ([H.R. 1325](#)). The Asylum Seeker Work Authorization Act 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. H.R. 1325 would enable asylum applicants to get to work and sustain themselves and their families; and
- Passage of the Immigration Court Efficiency and Children’s Court Act of 2023 (*introduced today*). 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.

“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. 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,” said Fran Eskin-Royer, Executive Director of the National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd.

Cristian Eduardo was 24 years old when he was trafficked after a false promise of a job and a better life. Now, his goal is to prevent people from being trafficked, but said more policies and better legislation are needed to prevent the paths that traffickers use to exploit immigrants.

“We need to remind ourselves of who is being trafficked. We are talking about human beings. We are talking about children. We are talking about people just like us,” Eduardo said at a webinar organized by AEHT and NAC on June 15, 2023. “People like me are pending on decisions of all of you. We can do better. We are the United States.”

For more information on the nexus between human trafficking and forced migration, visit [bit.ly/3CcdUYn](https://bit.ly/3CcdUYn) to find resources and to view the recent webinar.

***AEHT** 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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