

■ Executive Summary

Human trafficking is a form of modern slavery. Victims are denied their fundamental freedom, subjected to oppressive and horrifying conditions, and often denied even minimal pay. They are subjected to sexual exploitation or preyed upon for the product of their labor, or both. Traffickers target the most vulnerable – children, immigrants, and others with few ways of supporting themselves or finding help. Victims' stories are heartbreaking and demand a response.

In California and elsewhere, much of the focus of law enforcement has appropriately been on combatting sex trafficking, particularly among minors, and the Commission emphasizes that this work must continue. But we also believe the state can and must do more to respond to labor trafficking. California must establish a new coordinating body to orchestrate the fight against all forms of this heinous crime and collect relevant data so we can make informed decisions about our progress. This report outlines the need for such a body and our recommendations for how it might be constituted. We anticipate subsequent reports on labor trafficking later this year that will address other detailed policy recommendations to strengthen California's struggle against one of our society's most distressing crimes.

Background

Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud or coercion to deprive a victim of his or her liberty for the purpose of obtaining labor or sexual services. Researchers typically divide human trafficking into cases of sex trafficking or labor trafficking or both (cases in which the victim is forced to provide both sex and non-sexual labor). This study focuses on the state's response to labor trafficking, as opposed to cases that principally involve sex trafficking. Although trafficking typically involves other crimes, laws specifically banning trafficking are shockingly new, enacted at the federal level in 2000 and in California in 2005.

Labor trafficking victims may be men or women, young or old, native-born citizens or immigrants. However, a few commonalities are apparent. Most victims are in the prime working years of 18 to 40. Many are immigrants who have entered the country legally to perform some kind of temporary work and become unauthorized due to their trafficking. Research suggests that victims forced into domestic servitude are more likely to be women, while those in agricultural work are more likely to be men. Some research suggests that runaway and homeless youth are especially vulnerable.

The Extent of the Problem in California is Unknown

There is little authoritative data about the precise extent of labor trafficking in California. The United States is believed to be among the most common destination countries for trafficking, and California among the most common destination states. Limited data available demonstrates this crime takes place within California communities, but is not comprehensive enough to say with certainty exactly where and in which industries this crime occurs and who is likely victimized. A study in San Diego identified labor trafficking in the construction, janitorial and landscaping industries, but the problem clearly exists beyond border communities. State-funded programs report significant labor trafficking in a wide variety of counties in Northern California, Southern California, and the Central Valley. The Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking estimates a detailed study of the prevalence of human trafficking in California would cost approximately \$3 million to complete.

California's Response Has Focused on Just Part of the Problem

In the years since the state criminalized human trafficking, it has strengthened penalties for

traffickers, encouraged training to identify trafficking, and implemented other reforms. Often however the state's efforts have focused principally on sex trafficking rather than labor trafficking. And while a variety of state agencies play a role in combatting human trafficking, the state lacks a coordinated strategy to target this crime. By contrast, some other states, including Colorado, Washington, and Ohio, have created coordinating agencies designed to strengthen efforts to stop trafficking. Within California, innovative local leaders have created effective anti-trafficking task forces.

The Commission's Recommendation

The Commission believes it is past time for California to create a mechanism for coordinating the anti-trafficking efforts of all government agencies – state, local, and federal – and non-governmental organizations that do critical on-the-ground work to identify victims and help survivors. There must be a hub to coordinate efforts, collect data, increase public awareness, and share strategies to fight and prevent all forms of this crime.

To accomplish these goals, the Commission recommends that the state create the California Anti-Human Trafficking Council within the Governor's Office. The Council should be broad-based, and should include representatives of law enforcement, health and human service agencies, victims advocates and others. It should include state and local representatives and reflect the diverse regions and populations of California. Last, it should be provided with adequate staffing and meet with sufficient frequency to fulfill its mission. This mission should include, among other tasks, developing public awareness, collecting data, improving training guidelines, and developing standardized screening tools for industries in which trafficking is prevalent.

The Commission believes the creation of a new coordinating council is a critical first step in understanding more about this extraordinarily serious crime and strengthening California's response.