

**Opening Statement of Chairman Thomas R. Carper
Combating Human Trafficking: Federal, State, and Local Perspectives
September 23, 2013**

As prepared for delivery:

I'd like to begin by thanking Senator Heitkamp and Senator Chiesa for asking us to hold this hearing today to bring some needed attention to the issue of human trafficking.

Human trafficking has been described as modern-day slavery. This is because its victims are forced to work, including as prostitutes or in sweatshops, against their will. Trafficking victims may not be physically imprisoned, but they are trapped in often hellish conditions through physical or mental coercion that makes escape impossible, or at least seem impossible.

It's easy to think of human trafficking as something that happens somewhere else – in countries far away from ours that are suffering through war and poverty. Sadly, human trafficking is a real and growing problem all over the world, including here at home. And it can be invisible unless officials and citizens alike are trained to recognize the tell-tale signs.

By some measures human trafficking is the second most significant criminal enterprise in the world, generating an estimated \$32 billion in revenue. That is simply stunning. The statistics for one type of human trafficking, prostitution, are particularly shocking. I'm told that, every year, more than 100,000 children in the United States are forced into prostitution. The average age of entry into prostitution is 13 years old. In fact, I understand that there have been reports of teenage girls forced to work as prostitutes by gangs and literally branded with tattoos to mark them as property.

While the word 'trafficking' sounds like a crime that involves moving people, the truth is that human trafficking doesn't necessarily involve victims smuggled in from other countries –or even other states. Human traffickers prey on vulnerable people in our own communities. While some victims are undocumented immigrants, many are teenage runaways or other vulnerable individuals born and raised in the United States.

Just last year, in Wilmington, Delaware, a man was found guilty of forcing a 15 year old girl to work for him as a prostitute. And just last month, the FBI conducted a three-day operation in 76 cities that led to the rescue of 105 children who had been trafficked into the commercial sex trade. Two of the children were found in the Philadelphia suburbs.

This issue reminds me of a passage from the Book of Matthew in the Bible (Matthew 25:31), when Jesus describes how God looks on those who perform acts of kindness for the disadvantaged by saying 'in as much as you did it to one of the least of my brothers, you did it to me.' These vulnerable people being preyed on by human traffickers are clearly 'the least of my brothers,' and I believe that we have a moral responsibility to make sure that they are being protected.

I am always looking to understand the underlying causes of things, so that we are not just focusing on treating the symptoms. In the case of human trafficking, I am hoping that our witnesses today can help us to better understand three key things. First, we need to know what drives human trafficking so we can be more effective at stopping it. Second, we need to get better at identifying victims so we can more successfully intervene and remove them from this terrible situation. Lastly, we need better identify potential victims of trafficking so that we can intervene before they're ensnared and offer them effective treatment or services before they fall prey.

Today, we have two panels of witnesses who can help us understand the current efforts underway at the federal, state, local, and tribal level to attack human trafficking head on. On our first panel, we have four senior witnesses from the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security who will speak to how the federal government has made human trafficking a priority for law enforcement, and hopefully address some of the underlying causes. On our second panel, we have four witnesses who will speak to how human trafficking impacts our communities, and how state and local officials—and even school children—are tackling this problem. Senator Chiesa, I understand that you are pinch hitting for Dr. Coburn today. Thanks again to you and Senator Heitkamp for bringing this important issue to our attention.

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