



HER CAMPAIGN

**TAKING A
STAND**

**A Citizen's Guide to Advocating for
Stronger Anti-Human Trafficking
Legislation in Your State**



Core Message

Human trafficking is not only a criminal justice issue. It is a public health, behavioral health, child protection, housing, economic stability, and community safety issue.

If we want lasting change, survivor care must be treated as essential care, not optional charity. Survivors need access to long-term, trauma-informed, licensed, reimbursable services. States should build laws that protect victims, fund services, and hold traffickers, buyers, and exploiters fully accountable.

The Three Legislative Priorities

1

Protect Victims and Survivors

Ask your legislators to support laws that:

- Prevent trafficking victims from being criminalized for crimes directly connected to their exploitation.
- Expand vacatur, expungement, and criminal record relief for survivors.
- Require trauma-informed response from law enforcement, hospitals, courts, schools, and child welfare agencies.
- Protect minors from being treated as offenders in commercial sexual exploitation cases.
- Provide emergency shelter, long-term housing, legal advocacy, behavioral health care, substance use treatment, medical care, job training, and case management.
- Create survivor-informed policy councils or advisory boards.
- Require statewide referral pathways so every victim is connected to qualified services.

2

Fund Services Sustainably

Advocate for laws that move survivor care from short-term charity funding into durable public systems. Ask for:

- A dedicated state human trafficking victim services fund.
- Required offender fines and penalties directed into survivor services.
- State matching funds for federal victim service grants.
- Medicaid coverage pathways for licensed behavioral health, residential, intensive outpatient, partial hospitalization, peer support, care coordination, and recovery services when clinically appropriate.
- Funding for specialized providers serving trafficking survivors.
- Multi-year contracts instead of unstable one-year grants.
- Data collection that measures outcomes without exploiting survivor stories.

Key message to legislators:

“When survivors receive the right care early, states reduce long-term costs connected to homelessness, incarceration, emergency healthcare, untreated trauma, addiction, unemployment, and repeat victimization.”

3

Strengthen Accountability for Criminals

Ask for stronger laws against:

- Traffickers.
- Buyers of commercial sex, especially involving minors.
- Facilitators who knowingly profit from exploitation.
- Businesses that ignore or enable trafficking.
- Online, transportation, hospitality, massage, labor, and recruitment schemes that facilitate exploitation.

Policy options include:

- Strong felony penalties for trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children.
- Enhanced penalties when the victim is a minor, disabled, undocumented, homeless, in foster care, or otherwise vulnerable.
- Asset forfeiture or restitution directed to survivors.
- Mandatory restitution for victims.
- Civil remedies allowing survivors to sue traffickers and facilitators.
- Stronger labor trafficking enforcement.
- Training for prosecutors and judges.
- Specialized trafficking courts or dockets where appropriate.
- No statute of limitations, or extended statutes of limitations, for child trafficking cases.

How a Normal Citizen Can Start Advocating

Step 1 : Learn Your State's Current Law

Look up:

- Does your state have a human trafficking victim services fund?
- Does it provide criminal record relief for survivors?
- Are minors protected from prostitution charges?
- Are services funded through state appropriations, offender fees, grants, Medicaid, or victim compensation?
- Are penalties strong enough for traffickers and buyers?
- Does your state address both sex trafficking and labor trafficking?

Use resources from NCSL, Polaris, Shared Hope International, your state legislature, your attorney general, and local anti-trafficking coalitions.

Step 2 : Find Your Legislators

Search: “Find my state legislator” plus your state name. Write down:

- Your state representative.
- Your state senator.
- Their email.
- Their phone number.
- Whether they sit on committees related to judiciary, health, human services, appropriations, child welfare, criminal justice, or public safety.

Step 3 : Pick One Clear Ask

Do not begin with ten demands. Start with one clear legislative request.

Examples:

- “Please sponsor a bill creating a dedicated human trafficking survivor services fund.”
- “Please support Medicaid reimbursement pathways for licensed trauma and behavioral health services for trafficking survivors.”
- “Please strengthen criminal record relief for survivors.”
- “Please increase penalties for adults who purchase sex from minors.”
- “Please require offender fines to fund victim services.”
- “Please protect child trafficking victims from being criminalized.”

Step 4 : Build a Small Coalition

A legislator is more likely to listen when multiple credible voices agree.

Invite:

- Survivor leaders, only if they choose to participate and are not pressured to share trauma.
- Anti-trafficking service providers.
- Churches and faith communities.
- Medical and behavioral health providers.
- Law enforcement leaders.
- Prosecutors.
- Foster care advocates.
- Homelessness providers.
- Recovery programs.
- Business leaders.
- Parents and teachers.
- Local nonprofits.

Step 5 : Request a Meeting

Subject: Request for Meeting on Human Trafficking Legislation

Dear Senator/Representative [Name],

My name is [Your Name], and I live in your district. I am writing to request a meeting about strengthening our state's response to human trafficking.

I am especially concerned that survivors often need long-term housing, trauma care, behavioral health services, legal advocacy, and recovery support, but these services are often underfunded or unstable. I would like to discuss legislation that protects victims, creates sustainable funding for services, and strengthens accountability for traffickers and exploiters.

Would you or your staff be available for a 20-minute meeting?

Thank you for your service,

[Your Name]

[Address or City]

[Phone Number]

Step 6 : Prepare Your Talking Points

- Human trafficking is happening in our state.
- Survivors need more than rescue; they need long-term care.
- Current funding is often unstable, fragmented, or inaccessible.
- Survivor care should be integrated into healthcare, behavioral health, housing, and victim services systems.
- Strong laws must both protect victims and punish exploiters.
- I am asking you to support legislation that does three things: protects survivors, funds services, and strengthens penalties.

Step 7 : Tell the Truth Without Exploiting Survivors

Do not pressure survivors to tell their stories. Do not use graphic details. Do not sensationalize.

Say:

“Survivors need safety, medical care, trauma treatment, housing, legal support, and long-term recovery pathways.”

Avoid:

- Graphic stories.
- Dehumanizing language.
- Treating survivors as political props.
- Oversimplifying trafficking as only kidnapping.
- Ignoring labor trafficking.

Step 8: Follow Up

Within 24 hours, send a thank-you email.

Include:

- What you discussed.
- The specific ask.
- Any resources you promised.
- A request for next steps.

Sample One-Minute Testimony

Chair [Name] and members of the committee,

My name is [Your Name], and I live in [City]. I am here today to ask you to strengthen our state's response to human trafficking.

Survivors need more than emergency rescue. Many need long-term trauma care, housing, behavioral health treatment, legal advocacy, substance use recovery support, education, and employment pathways. Right now, too many services are underfunded, short-term, or unavailable.

We need a system that recognizes survivor care as healthcare and public safety. When survivors receive stable, trauma-informed care, our state reduces long-term costs connected to homelessness, incarceration, emergency healthcare, untreated trauma, and repeat exploitation.

I urge you to support legislation that protects victims, creates sustainable funding for survivor services, and holds traffickers, buyers, and exploiters accountable.

Thank you.

Sample Phone Script

Hello, my name is [Your Name], and I live in [City]. I am calling to ask Senator/Representative [Name] to support stronger human trafficking legislation.

I would like to see legislation that protects victims from criminalization, creates sustainable funding for survivor services, expands access to trauma-informed healthcare and behavioral health services, and strengthens penalties for traffickers and buyers.

Please ask the Senator/Representative to make this a priority this session. Thank you.

Step 9: Keep Going

Legislative advocacy takes persistence.

You can:

- Testify at committee hearings.
- Submit written testimony.
- Call committee members.
- Write op-eds.
- Host community education nights.
- Bring service providers to the capitol.
- Track bill deadlines.
- Thank legislators publicly when they help.
- Keep pressure on when bills stall.

Sample Social Media Post

Human trafficking survivors need more than rescue. They need safe housing, trauma-informed care, legal support, behavioral health services, recovery pathways, and long-term stability.

Our state needs legislation that protects victims, funds survivor services, and holds traffickers and exploiters accountable.

Survivor care is healthcare. Survivor care is public safety. Survivor care must be sustainably funded.

Contact your state legislators and ask them to act.

What Good Legislation Should Include

A strong anti-human trafficking bill should include:

- Clear definitions of sex trafficking and labor trafficking.
- Victim-centered protections.
- Safe harbor protections for minors.
- Criminal record relief for survivors.
- Mandatory restitution.
- A dedicated victim services fund.
- Funding for housing, legal services, behavioral health, medical care, case management, and recovery support.
- Strong penalties for traffickers, buyers, and facilitators.
- Labor trafficking enforcement.
- Survivor-informed policy development.
- Trauma-informed training.
- Data collection and accountability.
- Coordination between healthcare, behavioral health, law enforcement, courts, child welfare, schools, and service providers.



The Big Vision

The anti-human trafficking movement must move beyond crisis response alone. Rescue without recovery is not enough. Awareness without services is not enough. Punishment without survivor restoration is not enough.

Real change requires a system-integrated solution.

That means survivor care must be:

- Funded.
- Licensed where appropriate.
- Reimbursable where appropriate.
- Trauma-informed.
- Long-term.
- Measurable.
- Survivor-informed.
- Integrated into healthcare, behavioral health, housing, recovery, and justice systems.

This is how states can protect victims, reduce public costs, hold criminals accountable, and build a sustainable model of care that actually helps survivors rebuild their lives.

If someone is in immediate danger, call emergency services. In the United States, the National Human Trafficking Hotline is available 24/7 at 1-888-373-7888 or by text at 233733. For survivors looking for safe housing, call Rescue America's 24/7 rescue hotline at 833.599.FREE

To support survivors of human trafficking with life saving services, [join our giving community today.](#)



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