



March 7, 2024

Dear Senator:

We write on behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Committee on Migration, Catholic Charities USA, Catholic Relief Services, and the Catholic Health Association of the United States to express our support for H.R. 5856, the “Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2023.” Passed by the House of Representatives on February 13 with overwhelming bipartisan support, this legislation is critical for continuing and bolstering our nation’s efforts to eradicate human trafficking and assist human trafficking survivors.

The Catholic Church remains a global voice in the fight against human trafficking and care for survivors. The bishops of the United States have called for all necessary steps to address this injustice, including robust appropriations to support anti-trafficking efforts and victims’ services. In the United States, Catholic Charities agencies, hospitals, and other ministries of the Church provide services to human trafficking survivors, including trauma-informed care, housing and nutrition assistance, and workforce development. Nearly 100 out of the 168 Catholic Charities member agencies provide intensive case management and legal assistance to survivors to help them rebuild their lives. They also collaborate with the government at all levels to identify victims and raise awareness about trafficking throughout the United States. Since 2000, Catholic Relief Services has addressed human trafficking through more than 145 projects around the world.

H.R. 5856 is an important step forward. We are pleased to see inclusion of the Employment and Education Program, which would help prevent re-exploitation of trafficking survivors and facilitate their integration or reintegration into society through social services that emphasize self-sufficiency. We have long joined trafficking survivors in calling for such a program. We also welcome the legislation’s targeted efforts to award trafficking prevention education grants to organizations who work to protect children from labor trafficking, sexual exploitation, and abuse in a “linguistically accessible, culturally responsive, age-appropriate, and trauma-informed fashion.”

Earlier this month, for the World Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking, Pope Francis [affirmed](#) “that the fight against trafficking can be won, but it is necessary to get to the root of the problem and eliminate its causes.” To this end, we applaud expanding efforts to prevent human trafficking abroad by encouraging the integration of counter-trafficking activities in international development and humanitarian assistance programs. This intentional effort to integrate assistance and development with counter-trafficking initiatives has real potential to improve the conditions that frequently increase vulnerability to trafficking.

As a Church committed to upholding the God-given dignity of every person, we are grateful for Congress’ longstanding, bipartisan commitment to combatting the sin of human trafficking, both in the United States and around the world. We urge you to further that commitment by supporting H.R. 5856 and passing it without further delay.

Sincerely,

Most Reverend Mark J. Seitz  
Bishop of El Paso  
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration

Sean Callahan  
President and CEO  
Catholic Relief Services

Kerry Alys Robinson  
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