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Testimony in Support of House Resolution 6038
Presented to the House Committee on Federal and State Affairs
By Jennifer Rapp, Deputy Director
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Good morning. My name is Jennifer Rapp and I am the Deputy Director of the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit in the Office of Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt. I would like to thank Representative Barton for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Resolution 6038.

Madam Chairwoman and members of the Committee, human trafficking is a crime that involves exploitation of a person for the purpose of compelled labor or a commercial sex act. Human trafficking is based on recruiting, harboring and transporting people solely for the purpose of exploitation. It is one of the fastest growing criminal industries in the world. More than 80% of human trafficking involves domestic victims and the majority of these are children. This means that most trafficking in Kansas involves local children. All sexually exploited children are victims, even if no force or coercion is evident.

Labor trafficking can be found in a wide range of businesses and homes where men, women or children work as indentured servants.

Victims of human trafficking come from all walks of life and are entrapped in many different settings. Victims can be anyone, regardless of race, color, national origin, gender or socioeconomic status. Traffickers frequently prey on individuals who are poor, vulnerable, living in an unsafe situation or developmentally disabled. Homeless youth and foster children are often the target of traffickers. These victims are deceived by false promises of love, a good job, or a stable life, and lured into situations where they are forced to perform humiliating sex acts or work under deplorable conditions with little or no pay. Traffickers often go beyond physical abuse of their victims and use extreme forms of psychological abuse that exploit vulnerabilities to maintain their control over victims and prevent them from escaping. Traffickers use social media and complex psychological manipulation to recruit teenagers. They prey on a young person's vulnerabilities.

Trafficking victims typically require numerous types of emergency care and long-term services such as intensive case management, victim advocacy, housing, food, medical and dental care, mental health treatment, and substance abuse treatment.

The U. S. Justice Department has identified Kansas as an originating state for human trafficking. Our central location and intersection of major federal interstates such as I-70 and I-35 make Kansas a prime spot for both sex trafficking and labor trafficking. We have seen a notable increase in human trafficking cases in the Wichita area – 65 identified cases in 2015, up from 29 cases the previous year. Additionally, there has been a steady increase in reports of labor trafficking across Kansas occurring within traveling sales crews. In Fiscal Year 2015, grantees from the attorney general’s office located in several communities across Kansas reported serving 428 victims of human trafficking. This is up from 352 reported victims served in the previous year. In 2009, when our office first began asking our grantees to identify services to victims of human trafficking the number reported was two. While we know some of this increase might be due to an uptick in trafficking across the state, in addition, the higher number of identified victims reflects our increasing recognition of what trafficking looks like and the need to connect victims with services.

The attorney general’s office has focused its efforts to combat human trafficking on a 4-pronged approach: the prosecution of traffickers, the protection of victims, the prevention of the crime and the creation of partnerships with key state and federal agencies. In an effort to increase public awareness of human trafficking, our office partnered with Clear Channel Outdoors and Lamar Advertising last summer to launch a year-long statewide billboard campaign. The public awareness campaign is aimed at reaching both trafficking victims who may be unaware that resources exist to help them and community members who can help identify suspicious activity.

Madam Chairwoman, I thank you for the opportunity to address the House Committee on Federal and State Affairs this morning and I commend members of the House on this resolution to bring awareness to this important issue.

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