

Representative Bryan Steil (WI-01)
HFAC Member Day Hearing
December 12, 2019

I. Introduction

- Thank you for hosting today's Member hearing.
- Thank you to Chairman Eliot Engel and Ranking Member Michael McCaul for your commitment to the issue of human trafficking.

II. The Human Trafficking Problem

- I am here today to shine a light on issue that affects every corner of this nation and every country in the world—human trafficking.
- Human trafficking is a horrendous crime that presents a real threat to people in Southeast Wisconsin and around the globe.
- This isn't just a faraway problem—human trafficking has been reported in every Wisconsin county.
- Girls, boys, men, and women of all ages, nationalities, and backgrounds are victims of human trafficking.
- More than 500,000 people are trafficked across international borders every year. More than 14,000 women, children, and men are trafficked into the United States.
- This is a global epidemic.
- Criminals have become organized and sophisticated in their ways, making human trafficking a lucrative industry.
- The International Labor Organization estimates more than \$150 billion in illegal profit is made from forced labor each year.
- If there is a profit to be made, these criminals will take advantage of it.
- That is where a nonpartisan solution comes into play to deter these crimes from occurring.

III. The United States' Role in Human Trafficking

- Currently, the United States uses the Trafficking in Persons Report to engage foreign governments to combat human trafficking.
- Governments will report their efforts to stop human trafficking within their own country.
- Foreign aid is then given to these countries based on their strides to prevent these crimes.
- However, while the Trafficking in Persons Report evaluates several criteria, there is no requirement to showcase a country's efforts to disrupt the illicit financing of human trafficking.

IV. The Exposing the Illicit Financing of Human Trafficking Act

- In April, I introduced my first bill, the Exposing the Illicit Financing of Human Trafficking Act.
- This nonpartisan bill holds countries accountable for their involvement in human trafficking.

- The Exposing the Illicit Financing of Human Trafficking Act requires countries to report their efforts to investigate, prevent, and prosecute financial crimes associated with human trafficking.
- Right now, countries that receive U.S. aid have no responsibility to report their efforts to prevent money laundering from human trafficking.
- We must follow the money.
- And while this bill may be a simple change, it will have a global impact on how countries combat human trafficking.
- 47 of my colleagues have joined me in this effort—many of whom are members of this Committee.
- Not only does this bill strengthen our efforts to combat human traffickers' use of our domestic financial system, it also encourages other countries to cut off traffickers from the global financial system.

V. Looking Ahead and Conclusion

- This effort is just one piece of the puzzle.
- Fighting human trafficking requires a multifaceted approach.
- That's why awareness campaigns, school counselors and teachers, and law enforcement are a vital part of this effort.
- I'm thankful to Southeast Wisconsin's law enforcement community.
- Many of our county sheriffs and police officers have brought human trafficking issues to my attention.
- We have to work together—all of us—Republicans and Democrats—local, state, federal, and international partners—to take this crisis head-on.
- I continue working with our community in Southeast Wisconsin to address this problem.
- And I will continue fighting for this issue here in Congress.
- Bringing attention to human trafficking is a necessary first step.
- And passing this legislation and other anti-human trafficking bills is the next step.
- Our work isn't done.
- So today, I ask the Committee to mark-up the Exposing the Illicit Financing of Human Trafficking Act.
- I am confident this would pass with broad support from both sides of the aisle.
- Thank you again to Chairman Engel and Ranking Member McCaul for the opportunity.
- I would be happy to answer any questions on my bill following today's hearing.
- Thank you.