

Opening Statement for Chairman Fred Upton

“Examining H.R. 5411, the Trafficking Awareness Training for Health Care Act of 2014”

September 11, 2014

According to the US Department of Justice, human trafficking is the second fastest growing criminal industry — just behind drug trafficking. Sadly, approximately half of all victims are children.

Too often, this is a crime that goes unnoticed and one that is not well understood. It is simply too hard to imagine that it could be happening right here. But it is. Not only does human trafficking occur in the United States, it is a lucrative business with billions of dollars in profits. It happens because these victims are not easily identified and they are afraid. It happens in our own communities, because we are unaware. In order for victims of trafficking to break free, they need help.

Health care professionals who often interact with trafficking victims can be one source of help. Recent studies show that health care professionals are well positioned to be first responders if they have the training and skills to identify victims and meet their needs.

H.R. 5411, the Trafficking Awareness Training for Health Care Act, would provide for the development of evidence-based best practices for health care providers to identify and assist victims of human trafficking. This bill offers us an opportunity to work with the medical community to ensure that human trafficking education and practice becomes a part of health care training.

I would like to thank Rep. Ellmers for introducing this important piece of legislation and I look forward to testimony from today's witnesses about the problem of human trafficking and how the bill will help rescue and restore these victims.