Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Lucas
As Submitted for the Record

*Joint Investigations & Oversight Subcommittee and Research & Technology
Subcommittee Hearing*
The Role of Technology in Countering Trafficking in Persons
July 28, 2020

Human trafficking is a global problem, causing untold suffering and pain. And while it often remains an unseen problem, the truth is that it is far more widespread and destructive than it may seem.

Emerging and evolving technologies can help us fight this plague, though. One of the reasons I enjoy serving on the Science Committee is our ability to focus on solutions to some of the greatest challenges we face.

Trafficking in people is a complex problem and fighting it requires work on many fronts, from deterrence to detection and from enforcement to survivor support. The encouraging news is that advances in technology give us new tools at every step of this process.

Using AI to perform big data analysis can help us identify patterns of trafficking—a task far too time-consuming for human agents to perform. AI tools can comb through websites to find advertisements for trafficked people. Photo recognition software can help agents identify where victims are being held by analyzing photos for similarities to known locations. Similarly, facial recognition software can identify similarities between photos of trafficked people and missing person notices. Because of machine learning, the more these tools are used, the better they become.

This is just a small sampling of technological interventions we can employ to fight trafficking, and our witnesses will share many more today.

The President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons is committed to ending human trafficking and supporting survivors of this modern-day slavery.

As Members of the Science Committee, we can help focus and enhance the technological tools available to the federal government in this effort.

This is one more area in which investing in basic research can produce exceptional dividends. Strategic investment in the fundamental knowledge needed to advance technologies like AI

and big data analysis will pay off in discoveries and innovations that law enforcement, private industry, and non-governmental organizations can use to coordinate and improve their efforts to fight trafficking in persons.

It's one of thousands of applications that will benefit from technological advancements, and it is one more reason I've proposed doubling our national investment in basic research in the Securing American Leadership in Science and Technology Act.

I hope that our Committee can work together to support the technology needed to end human trafficking.