

House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Regional Perspectives in the Global Fight Against Human Trafficking

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I appreciate the privilege of testifying for you today on behalf of the remarkable women, children, and men, I serve as the Executive Director of the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST). There is no doubt that modern-day slavery exists in California and around the world today. I have witnessed first-hand for over 20 years the impact of this grave human rights abuse on a day-to-day basis.

Since its inception in 1998, CAST has been providing specialized services to survivors of trafficking and modern day slavery, while informing the movement to prevent modern-day slavery through our evidence-based experiences gained by working directly with over 1000 survivors from over 58 countries, including the United States. We use a survivor-centered empowerment approach to support trafficked victims in realizing their individual potential. CAST serves survivors who suffer from all forms of modern-day slavery- including sex trafficking and labor trafficking. CAST's youngest survivor has been two years old; our oldest survivor is 72 years old. All have been exploited and forced to work against their will, often for years at a time.

At CAST, our key priority is to ensure that survivors of trafficking receive the comprehensive services they deserve and need in order to rebuild their lives. Our services include emergency response, shelter, case management and legal services. Clients who graduate from CAST programs are invited to join our survivor leadership program to be a voice for people who are still enslaved. Survivors' voices inform CAST's training and policy work at both the state and national levels.

To provide the comprehensive services that survivors so greatly need, CAST works closely with other non-governmental organizations, pro bono attorneys, law enforcement officials, and both federal and state government agencies. Despite ongoing efforts to leverage existing resources, CAST feels the gap in services that are currently available to all survivors of human trafficking.

In April, a new California law was implemented which mandates posting of the CAST hotline at adult businesses, bus stops, emergency rooms, urgent care centers, transit centers and truck stops throughout the state. In just the first six months since the law was implemented, CAST has seen a dramatic increase in calls to its hotline--a more than 300% increase over previous years. As a result, our Emergency Response System and comprehensive service staff capacities have been exceeded, forcing us to start a wait list for services for the first time in the agency's history. It is critical for CAST, and others, to further expand the scale of the services programs for victims of human trafficking.

For the last three years, the United States Trafficking in Person's office has recommended additional money for survivor services. Despite this recommendation almost no increases have been made in funding for survivors since the TVPA of 2000. Last July, a report showed that the U.S. government spends approximately \$100 million annually to combat the \$9 billion dollar and growing industry of human trafficking ("Following the Money: Spending on Anti-Trafficking," *Anti-trafficking Review, Global Funding Information Sheet, Issue 3, July 2013*). Compare this to the approximate \$15

billion dollars that we spend annually on the war on drugs. Clearly, efforts to prevent trafficking and assist victims need more support.

Through CAST's direct work with survivors in California, CAST understands that the 21st century slave may not be in chains or shackles. However, modern-day slaves are no freer. Modern-day slavery takes many forms. Trafficking victims toil in factories in the United States. Trafficking victims harvest vegetables and process food that ends up on our dining room tables. They clean people's homes and take care of the young, elderly and sick. They are enslaved not only through physical restraint, but also through coercion, fear, and intimidation. In today's global economy, workers can be enslaved by threats of deportation, lack of viable alternatives, and especially debt.

We often think of undocumented immigrants as vulnerable to human trafficking. But, CAST's work shows that labor trafficking is flourishing in the context of documented visa programs. Almost 50% of CAST's legal case load includes individuals who came to the United States on lawful visas.

Human trafficking thrives in the United States and around the world when immigrant workers are forced to pay labor recruiters' high fees, often at exorbitant interest rates, in order to work lawfully in the United States. These workers become vulnerable to debt bondage – one of the most pervasive forms of modern slavery. Unscrupulous foreign labor recruiters deceive workers about wages and working conditions. Immigrants, who are eager to work, often pay hundreds or thousands of dollars at inflated interest rates only to end up with false contracts and broken promises.

CAST believes that one of the most important policy changes we can make is better regulation of foreign labor recruiters through the following four-prong approach:

- 1. Elimination of Fees:** No foreign labor contractor, or agent or employee of a foreign labor contractor, should be allowed to assess any fee (including visa fees, processing fees, transportation fees, legal expenses, placement fees, and other costs) to a worker for any foreign labor contracting activity. Such costs or fees may be borne by the employer, but these fees cannot be passed along to the worker. This is one of the most crucial elements to eliminate debt bondage for immigrant workers.
- 2. Disclosure:** Foreign labor contractors and employers must be required to fully disclose to the worker all of the terms and conditions of their work in writing (both in English and in the worker's language).
- 3. Registration:** The Department of Labor should administer a process for foreign labor contractors to obtain a certificate of registration. Employers must be required to use only foreign labor contractors who are properly registered under this system.
- 4. Enforcement & Accountability:** The Department of Labor should establish an administrative process for receiving, investigating, and adjudicating complaints against the compliance of either foreign labor contractors or employers. The civil

rights for workers themselves are also key to preventing trafficking. Workers must be protected from retaliation and employers must be held accountable for the actions of the foreign labor contractors that they hire.

CAST commends Chairman Royce for his leadership in introducing HR 3344 in the House last week. This piece of legislation takes the comprehensive four-prong approach outlined above. HR 3344 is an important bill that will help prevent human trafficking and protect workers coming to the U.S. from around the world.

In addition to the protections already mentioned in the legislation, CAST would like to recommend the inclusion of J-1 visa holders. Polaris Project has found that the J-1 visa is the second most frequently cited visa in labor exploitation and human trafficking for the period December 2007 through July 2013. J-1 visa holders, who are often au pairs and nannies, deserve the same protection as other workers coming to the U.S. from abroad.

Finally, CAST believes that business must be an integral partner in combating modern-day slavery. CAST was an original co-sponsor of SB 657, the California Transparency in Supply Chains Act, which requires companies to publicly reveal the steps they are taking to eradicate modern-day slavery from their supply chains. In 2009 the U.S. government released a report for the first time showing that 122 goods in 58 countries around the world were made by forced labor and/or child labor. Today, this number has grown to 409 goods in 342 countries. These goods are items that we might encounter on a daily basis, including agricultural products, textiles and electronics.

Given how prevalent modern-day slavery is in the global supply chain, CAST now hopes that measures similar to the California Transparency in Supply Chains Act can be adopted federally. CAST calls for the House to reintroduce HR 2759 (112th): Business Transparency on Trafficking and Slavery Act.

Thank you for your attention and for the invitation to testify before you today. I look forward to answering any further questions you may have.

I am now pleased to introduce Angela Guanzon, a member of the CAST Survivor Advisory Caucus. Angela is a survivor of labor trafficking and will speak on the abuses she suffered and her recommendations for policy change.