

October 22, 2021

House Judiciary Committee Member Day

Rep. Michael Waltz Written Testimony

Thank you, Chairman Nadler and Ranking Member Jordan for holding this Members' Day hearing for the House Judiciary Committee. I am testifying today to discuss an issue that is of great concern to this Committee – human trafficking. In doing so, I will again request the Committee to markup, or favorably report H.R. 4070, the *Study To Observe and Prevent (STOP) Human Trafficking Act of 2021*, which has been referred solely to the House Judiciary Committee.

Human trafficking is a multi-billion dollar criminal industry affecting nearly 25 million people worldwide. The National Human Trafficking hotline successfully identified over 63,000 situations of human trafficking from 2007 to 2019, unfortunately these numbers represent only a fraction of the problem in here in the United States as human trafficking is notoriously underreported.

My home state of Florida ranks third behind California and Texas in the number of human trafficking cases reported by state. When discussing the issue of human trafficking with community stakeholders in Florida, many concerns surrounded adult entertainment clubs. These clubs are known to be high-risk locations for human trafficking. Stakeholders often see victims return to work at these venues, furthering the cycle of trafficking, exploitation, and victimization. Despite this, there is a lack of federal data to support what we know to be true of these venues, which significantly limits our ability as lawmakers to protect individuals from these high-risk adult entertainment clubs.

The National Human Trafficking hotline has the largest known data set compiled on sex and labor trafficking in the United States and is frequently cited and referenced for that reason. However, it is important for this Committee to know that the Trafficking Hotline's primary focus is to provide support to trafficking victims and survivors – data collection comes secondary to that support and only when necessary.

I know from firsthand experience that our federal agencies primarily cite the Trafficking Hotline's data and reports when responding to requests for information on domestic human trafficking data. If data is only collected by the Trafficking Hotline when deemed necessary to provide support to victims and survivors, why are our federal departments and agencies relying on the Hotline as a primary source of trafficking data in the United States? What data are these departments and agencies collecting through their own work and investigations? It is clear that in addition to addressing concerns regarding the prevalence of human trafficking at adult entertainment clubs, we must also find a way to improve trafficking data collection at our federal departments and agencies.

That is why I introduced H.R. 4070, the *STOP Human Trafficking Act of 2021* on June 22, 2021. Since then, H.R. 4070 has gained a total of 23 bipartisan cosponsors, including three Members of this Committee. This straightforward bill will require the Attorney General to conduct a study regarding human trafficking at adult entertainment clubs and report the findings to Congress. The Attorney General will conduct the study in coordination with the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons and relevant outside human trafficking organizations.

My bill will yield robust data on human trafficking at these high-risk locations by requiring inter-agency coordination as well as coordination with outside groups with anti-human trafficking expertise. In order to effectively conduct this study, federal agencies will have to adjust and update current data collection operations to better monitor domestic trafficking cases and trends.

No individual in the United States, or anywhere else in the world, should be subjected to human trafficking in any form. Congress has the responsibility and power to enact impactful legislation to protect individuals from this modern-day slavery. Such efforts to combat human trafficking have a longstanding history of strong bipartisan support in Congress and this bill is no different.

In closing, I respectfully ask Chairman Nadler and Ranking Member Jordan to hold a markup, or favorably discharge H.R. 4070, the *STOP Human Trafficking Act of 2021*, so that we can better understand the prevalence and patterns of human trafficking and enact legislation to eradicate it.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Waltz". The signature is stylized and cursive, with the first name "Michael" written in a smaller font size than the last name "Waltz".

Michael Waltz