

Good morning Madam Chair and Members of the Committee. Thank you for allowing me this honor to appear before you.

My name is Katherine Fernandez Rundle and I am the State Attorney for Miami Dade County Florida (which encompasses 35 municipalities). I have been the State Attorney in Miami since 1993. Throughout my career I have seen the effects of many horrific crimes. It wasn't until 2012 when I read that Florida was reported to be #3 in the United States for the number of victims of human trafficking that I realized this crime was happening in our back yard, and none of us were recognizing it or doing enough about.

Our experience is that human trafficking does not limit itself to the stereotypes depicted in the movies. The reality is human trafficking is everywhere and varies in appearance. It occurs in wealthy suburbia, as well as low income communities. It occurs in hotels, massage parlors, and even licensed storefronts. It affects every one of our communities, rich and poor; every ethnicity, every race, every gender, and most importantly our very own; local boys and girls, our children and our youth.

I'm happy to report we have come a long way and since 2012, and my office has worked with over 700 victims of human trafficking and filed over 619 criminal human trafficking related cases. I'm sad to report, the youngest victim we have worked with was twelve years of age.

Human trafficking is an ugly and often inhuman crime of exploitation. This is why it is referenced to as modern day slavery. Not surprisingly, the victims typically are the most vulnerable, primarily our children and our youth. Thirty-four percent (34%) of our cases involved victims under the age of eighteen! The remaining sixty-six percent (66%), were mostly between the ages of 18-24; 92% are female. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of

our cases involve local victims that include children and youth from our schools, our parks, our foster care system. Human Trafficking is a public health and mental health threat to our children and youth.

Rescuing human trafficking victims, requires much more than locating them and physically removing them from their predators. Most have no safe home to return to, no clothing other than that which they are wearing, and many have not eaten or slept in days. Many have been beaten; drugged; raped; isolated; branded; threatened with retaliation; stripped of all their dignity and identity. Their mental, physical, and emotional injuries are often so profound, many are unable to heal and rebound without substantial and sustainable assistance. When proper services are not provided, many victims end up back on the streets where traffickers are waiting to “save” them and restart the sexual exploitation and violent abuse cycle.

We in law enforcement must act to stop the traffickers from exploiting others. History has taught us that to successfully prosecute our cases we must ensure services are provided from day one and continue to be provided throughout the duration of the prosecution. Otherwise, our survivors will end up as victims again, in the hands of new traffickers, and our cases will fall apart.

We have also had to develop new methods of investigation and prosecution and developed a network of victim services. Our human trafficking prosecutions have become victim focused, not reliant on the victim. We have created in our community a safety net of partnerships that will assist with housing, physical and mental health needs, and reintegration into society. You will hear today from one of our most integral partners, the THRIVE Clinic, which has proven to be invaluable. Finding the long-term sustainable resources necessary to address the

needs throughout the pendency of active prosecutions, is a constant struggle for us and for them.

In 2018, we opened our Institute for Coordination, Advocacy and Prosecution of Human Trafficking (ICAP) - a building dedicated solely to combating human trafficking, with the goal of creating a single doorway to focus efforts and resources in one location. Our building houses prosecutors, law enforcement, victim services, and soon will also house the Department of Children and Families. They say it takes a village... so we created one!

I am very proud to tell you that Miami is very collaborative. We would not have become a national model, without all our community service providers, and law enforcement partners, local, state and federal. However, local authorities and prosecutors' offices like mine, need a lot more resources to battle this horrific scourge. Large scale events, such as a Super Bowl, strain our limited resources even more.

Super Bowl 54 is taking place in my community in less than two months. While we have been preparing for the surge this may bring, we could use more help. We fear that traffickers will be coming to our city to make money during Super Bowl...after all pimping is a business. Although I cannot verify numbers for you, I have read that worldwide it may be a \$150 Billion industry and a \$32 Billion industry in the U.S. Florida being an agricultural state also attracts labor traffickers.

Although conjecture on my part, I believe that these traffickers have found a safer and more profitable crime in selling children for sex than selling illegal narcotics. To protect our most vulnerable and to rescue those

transported in, we have created training and costly messaging about what human trafficking is and what members in the community should look for. We have also had to create adequate reporting methods, and have rapid response teams ready, which include medical professionals on standby, prosecutors on call, housing, food, clothing, and a whole host of other services.

Using the Super Bowl as an opportunity, an aggressive and comprehensive awareness campaign has been developed with our new hotline (305) FIX-STOP with text and hashtag capabilities. The goal is upon receiving a call, a rapid response team (depending on the circumstances) will be dispatched to investigate and rescue the victim.

The campaign, launched by the Woman's Fund last month will be community wide (35 municipalities) from the airports, seaport, truck stop to billboards in public transportation site. Hopefully, we can serve as a demonstration to other communities on how to attack this crime, especially during a potential "surge".

But the needs don't end there. Additional resources will be needed after Super Bowl 54. Miami and Florida are magical...so we are a destination for events nearly every month. Resources will be needed to address the additional rescues and cases developed prior to Super Bowl 54. Resources will also be needed to continue rescuing victims and developing cases for the human trafficking that occurs 365 days a year, beyond Super Bowl.

So how can you help us as one of the leading counties in the country in our anti human trafficking efforts resolve this growing epidemic? *(attached) There are many ways, but since time is limited, I'll briefly discuss three:

First: Resources within the HHS, USHUD and the Office of Violence Against Women and other federal resources should be explored to assist us.

Second: the Federal government could provide resources to allow more local prosecutor offices to create and sustain human trafficking units staffed by prosecutors, victim counselors, and investigators with advanced training and expertise on identifying, investigating, and prosecuting both labor and sex trafficking cases. Dedicated full-service human trafficking units in prosecutors' offices throughout our nation should be the norm, not the exception. These units will also work closely with US Attorney's Offices, ICE and the FBI. Human trafficking units could be provided funding commensurate with the problem. In Florida, our needs are much higher than the needs of neighboring states who many not be as affected by this horrific crime.

Third: the Federal government could support the development of proper information sharing mechanisms. We have learned traffickers are constantly transporting victims to different cities and states. They perpetrate these crimes from one city to the next, routinely leaving law enforcement one step behind. We need help developing law enforcement tools that will encourage and allow for information sharing across jurisdictions and around the country; something like the intelligence databases such as CODIS and those created to document gangs.

I have supplemented this testimony with materials highlighting the infrastructure my office and my community have put in place to fight human trafficking. In those same materials you will also see highlights of cases we successfully prosecuted, and collaborations with our national partners.

While we know the victim-centered approach we have developed is still in its infancy, I can wholeheartedly tell you it is a must in our fight against human trafficking. It is also quite costly. Please help us sustain and improve our efforts.

Together we can be stronger, and we will bring an end to this modern-day slavery!

Thank you!

**Attached Polaris data