

## **Put Trafficking Victims First Act**

Senators Gillibrand and Rubio

Human trafficking is a horrific practice that typically preys upon the most vulnerable among us. Traffickers leverage a range of tools from psychological coercion to use of force to take advantage of potential victims as well as to isolate them from others. This means that not only do victims suffer significant trauma, but also that they can have difficulty trusting others who may be trying to help them. There is a tremendous need for law enforcement entities as well as service providers to have access to the best practices and tools necessary to truly help victims escape and to recover. These tools include improved victim services, trauma-informed support, better data on the prevalence and trends of human trafficking, and effective mechanisms to identify and rescue trafficking victims. This bill is an important step toward addressing these critical needs. The legislation:

- Directs the Attorney General to provide training and technical assistance for Federal, State, and local government agencies, prosecutors, and law enforcement officials on:
  - Investigating, prosecuting, and preventing trafficking through a trauma-informed, victim-centered approach.
  - Ensuring that law enforcement officers and prosecutors make every attempt to determine whether an individual's participation in a particular unlawful activity is related to their own trafficking before arresting or prosecuting them.
  - Facilitating access for child trafficking victims to important legal protections.
  - Encouraging states to better identify victims.
- Establishes an expert working group to identify the methodological barriers hampering data collection on human trafficking.
  - Calls for a report to Congress on methodologies to estimate the prevalence of human trafficking and best practices to determine trends of human; evaluations of the effectiveness of current policies and procedures to address victims' needs; and an analysis of the varying characteristics of victims in different regions and how their vulnerabilities might be uniquely addressed.
  - Directs the AG to develop and implement a survey of survivors seeking and receiving services to better understand where and how victims are accessing services, how they are referred to services, how assessment tools work to identify victims, and to help estimate the prevalence of human trafficking identification in the United States.
- Directs the Attorney General to submit to Congress a report on efforts to increase mandatory restitution orders and use of asset forfeiture to provide restitution to trafficking victims. This is a follow-up to JVTAs efforts to get Federal prosecutors to order mandatory restitution for victims.
- Expresses the Sense of Congress to encourage states to adopt rights and protections for victims including access to housing, trauma-informed care, implementing better screening mechanisms for children entering child welfare services, creating state-level vacatur laws, and developing a state 24-hour emergency response plan to provide victims with immediate protection and support when they are first identified.