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Human Trafficking Legislation Fact Sheet

H.R. 2283, H.R. 4449, H.R. 4980, H.R. 5076, H.R. 5081, H.R. 5135, H.R. 5111, and H.R. 5116

The U.S. House of Representatives considered a series of bills aimed at addressing human trafficking during the week of July 21, 2014. Below are descriptions and reactions from Polaris to the legislation.

H.R. 2283: Human Trafficking Prioritization Act

Sponsor: Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ-4)

Highlights: H.R. 2283 elevates the U.S. Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking (J/TIP) to the status of a Bureau. This change also elevates the head of J/TIP to Assistant Secretary, a position with direct access to the Secretary of State.

Polaris Reaction: Polaris applauds this bill and supports elevating the J/TIP Office to a Bureau. The State Department's Trafficking in Persons Office plays a critical role in anti-human trafficking efforts worldwide. In addition to distributing grants to anti-trafficking NGOs here in the United States and around the world, this office publishes the annual Trafficking in Persons Report that ranks 188 countries on their efforts to combat human trafficking. Raising human trafficking to the status of other important foreign policy priorities demonstrates a strong commitment to end modern slavery from the federal government.

H.R. 4449: Human Trafficking Prevention Act

Sponsor: Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney (D-NY-18)

Highlights: The bill requires that U.S. Foreign Service officials, including Ambassadors, Deputy Chiefs of Mission, and other embassy officials, receive training on human trafficking.

Polaris Reaction: Polaris supports efforts within the federal government to train all employees to ensure they are educated about human trafficking and modern slavery, know how to recognize it, and can take steps to prevent or report it.

H.R. 4980: Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act

Sponsor: Rep. Dave Camp (R-MI-4)

Highlights: H.R. 4980 amends the Social Security Act by adding requirements to state child welfare agencies receiving funding under the Act for sex trafficked minors. The bill requires states to include policies and procedures in child welfare plans for identifying, documenting, and providing appropriate services to children over which the state has responsibility. The bill also requires states to report child sex trafficking victims to law enforcement and to release the number of those referrals on an annual basis. Policies and procedures must also be developed for locating children missing from foster care, determining what factors contributed to the child going missing, and how those factors will be addressed. The state must report missing children to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). Finally, H.R. 4980 creates reporting requirements for the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS). HHS must report the number of children in foster care identified as sex trafficking victims, and whether they were victimized before or after they entered the foster care system.

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Polaris Reaction: While Polaris is supportive of this bill, we do not believe it should be limited to child sex trafficking victims to the exclusion of child victims of labor trafficking. By operating the National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline, Polaris has learned of over 600 cases of reported labor trafficking that referenced the involvement minors. These victims also require support, and we urge Congress to take a more inclusive approach when passing human trafficking legislation. Nonetheless, this bill is a step in the right direction and will aid victims of sex trafficking.

H.R. 5076: Enhancing Services for Runaway and Homeless Victims of Youth Trafficking Act of 2014

Sponsor: Rep. Joseph Heck (R-NV-3)

Highlights: H.R. 5076 amends the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act to include human trafficking as a type of trauma for which entities providing assistance to runaway and homeless youth can seek funding. The funding can be used for training to better identify and work with victims of human trafficking. The bill also authorizes grants for NGOs to provide street-based services to victims of human trafficking or children at risk of becoming victims.

Polaris Reaction: Polaris supports these changes because they acknowledge the need to train and develop the skills runaway and homeless youth service providers require to better meet the needs of this vulnerable population. Runaway and homeless youth are extremely vulnerable to being trafficked or may have already been victimized. Allowing service providers to obtain funds specifically for human trafficking will support work that is vital to the prevention of and treatment for victims of human trafficking.

H.R. 5081: Strengthening Child Welfare Response to Trafficking Act of 2014

Sponsor: Rep. Karen Bass (D-CA-37)

Highlights: H.R. 5081 amends the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act by adding requirements to the plan that state child welfare agencies must develop to receive funding under the Act. States are required to develop provisions and procedures to: identify and assess reports of child sex trafficking; train state child welfare staff on identification and assessment of child sex trafficking victims; and provide referrals for services. The state may include labor trafficking victims in the policies established. The bill also requires states to submit information about the number of trafficking victims identified in the data reports they are required to submit under the Act. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) must submit a report on the prevalence of child trafficking that summarizes the findings of the states, while also identifying federal barriers to identification and assessment of child victims.

Polaris Reaction: Polaris supports the bill. It is important that state child welfare agencies are engaged in the identification and treatment of child victims of trafficking. Polaris is disappointed that the requirements of the bill do not extend to child victims of labor trafficking. We encourage states to report on both forms of trafficking in any protocols developed, which should include labor and sex trafficking victims.

H.R. 5135: Human Trafficking Prevention, Intervention, and Recovery Act of 2014

Sponsor: Rep. Kristi Noem (R-SD-At Large)

Highlights: H.R. 5135 directs the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (PITF) to assess the current efforts to address human trafficking at the state and federal level, to review research and reports on deterring and preventing human trafficking, and to identify best practices on the deterrence and prevention of child trafficking. The PITF is required to submit a report on its findings. The bill also requires the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) to submit a report on current efforts by federal and state law enforcement to combat trafficking. The GAO report



must include information on federal anti-human trafficking grants. H.R. 5135 also amends the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) to include housing as a service for which the U.S. Attorney General may provide grant funding.

Polaris Reaction: Severe gaps in services exist across the country for victims of human trafficking, especially for housing and shelter. Polaris supports efforts to better assess and understand the current federal and state response to human trafficking, while enabling the Attorney General to issue grants that can help fill these shelter gaps.

H.R. 5111: To Improve the Response to Victims of Child Sex Trafficking

Sponsor: Rep. Joyce Beatty (D-OH-3)

Highlights: The bill amends the current language of the Missing Children’s Assistance Act from “child prostitution” to “child sex trafficking.”

Polaris Reaction: Although this bill modifies language and does not establish a substantive change to the federal response to human trafficking, Polaris supports efforts that clarify that child victims of sex trafficking are just that – victims, and not “prostitutes”.

H.R. 5116: Human Trafficking Detection Act of 2014

Sponsor: Rep. Mark Meadows (R-NC-11)

Highlights: The bill requires the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to train all relevant Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and other personnel to effectively deter, detect, and disrupt human trafficking. In addition, the bill requires the DHS Secretary to report on the effectiveness of the training, and it permits the agency to share the training curricula with state, local, or tribal governments or private organizations.

Polaris Reaction: CBP agents are often the first government officials to encounter a trafficking victim, and TSA agents may also come in contact with victims. Ensuring officials from both of these agencies are properly trained on how to recognize the indicators of human trafficking so they can then respond appropriately is critical. Polaris supports this bill.