



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops



Catholic
Charities
USA®



April 1, 2025

Dear Representative:

We write on behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Migration, Catholic Charities USA, Catholic Relief Services, and the Catholic Health Association of the United States to express our support for H.R. 1144, the "Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2025." We are grateful that the previous versions of this bill were passed by the House during the preceding two congresses with overwhelming bipartisan support. We again urge you to advance this bill, which would bolster our nation's efforts to eradicate human trafficking and assist human trafficking survivors, if enacted.

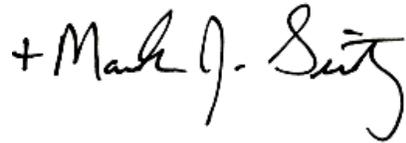
The Catholic Church remains a global voice in the fight against human trafficking, as well as a leader in efforts to care for survivors through various ministries. The bishops of the United States have called for all necessary steps to address this injustice, including robust appropriations to support anti-trafficking efforts and victims' services. In the United States, Catholic Charities agencies, hospitals, and other ministries of the Church provide services to human trafficking survivors, including trauma-informed care, housing and nutrition assistance, and workforce development. Nearly 100 out of the 168 Catholic Charities member agencies provide intensive case management and legal assistance to survivors to help them rebuild their lives. For some rural communities, Catholic Charities or a similar nonprofit is the only provider of survivor-support services within hundreds of miles. They also collaborate with the government at all levels to identify survivors, support law enforcement investigations, and raise awareness about trafficking throughout the United States. Since 2000, Catholic Relief Services has addressed human trafficking through more than 145 projects around the world.

We are pleased to see that H.R. 1144 retains the Human Trafficking Survivors Employment and Education Program included in previous iterations of the bill, which would help prevent re-exploitation of trafficking survivors and facilitate their integration or reintegration into society through social services that emphasize self-sufficiency. We have long joined trafficking survivors in calling for such a program. We also welcome continued inclusion of targeted efforts to award trafficking prevention education grants to organizations that work to protect children from labor trafficking, sexual exploitation, and abuse.

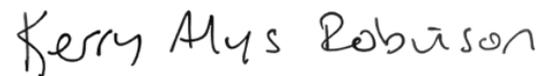
While we appreciate that H.R. 1144 maintains provisions that amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (FAA) to include "effective counter-trafficking in persons, policies, and programs" as criteria for assessing the progress of a country receiving assistance, we were disheartened to see that provisions pertaining to the integration of counter-trafficking activities in USAID programming have been removed, given that USAID was created to implement the FAA's goals. The FAA provides "that the principal purpose of United States bilateral development assistance is to help the poor majority of people in developing countries to participate in a process of equitable growth. . . which will enable them to satisfy their basic needs and lead lives of decency, dignity, and hope." This noble purpose is vital for mitigating the circumstances that make individuals more susceptible to human trafficking.

As a Church committed to upholding the God-given dignity of every person, we are grateful for Congress' longstanding, bipartisan commitment to combatting the sin of human trafficking, both in the United States and around the world. We recognize the reintroduction of this bill and the persistence of its cosponsors, especially Representative Chris Smith, as admirable efforts to address the scourge of human trafficking. We urge you to further Congress' commitment to meaningful anti-trafficking measures by supporting H.R. 1144 and passing it without further delay.

Respectfully yours,



Most Reverend Mark J. Seitz
Bishop of El Paso
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration



Kerry Alys Robinson
President & CEO
Catholic Charities USA



Sean Callahan
President and CEO
Catholic Relief Services



Sister Mary Haddad, RSM
President and CEO
Catholic Health Association of the United States