



**TESTIMONY OF MARY C. ELLISON, J.D.**  
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**Before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission**  
***International Human Trafficking and Forced Labor***  
***Wednesday, November 28, 2012***

Mr. Co-Chairmen McGovern and Wolf, and other distinguished members of the Commission, thank you for holding this hearing on one of the most pressing human rights issues of our time – human trafficking and modern-day slavery, and thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I am the Director of Policy for Polaris Project, a non-profit organization named after the North Star that guided slaves towards freedom along the Underground Railroad. Since our founding in 2002, Polaris Project has been guided by a singular vision: a world without slavery. Today, Polaris Project is changing how communities fight all forms of human trafficking. Founded with the belief that everyday people can come together to do extraordinary things, Polaris Project is building a nationwide network to combat trafficking and serves the full range of its victims: foreign nationals and U.S. citizens, men and women, children and adults. Our expert knowledge of trafficking networks around the world is sought by top law enforcement officers, elected officials, business leaders, and service providers. By successfully pushing for stronger federal and state laws, operating the National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline (NHTRC), conducting trainings, and providing vital services to our clients, Polaris Project is creating long-term solutions that will eradicate modern-day slavery.

Every day, my compassionate colleagues at Polaris Project and our partner organizations comfort trafficked persons whose lives, minds, hearts, and bodies were torn open by traffickers eager to profit from their exploitation. I have had the honor and privilege of meeting many of these courageous survivors who have come to us from across the globe, having been trafficked by strangers, spouses and loved ones, employers, labor recruiters, and others. . Despite the scars left by traffickers, we see the resilience of the human spirit in these amazing survivors. We have witnessed survivors graduate from English as a Second Language courses, find jobs, move into and make their own homes, get married, have children, and achieve what we all want and need—dignity, freedom, and independence.

We are here today to discuss international trafficking and forced labor. Human trafficking and modern-day slavery is a grave human rights violation and heinous crime prohibited by international, national, state, and local laws. It still persists because of the high profit and low risk nature of this illicit multi-billion dollar business of trafficking in human beings. As in all businesses, we see the forces of supply and demand at work. Here, the supply of vulnerable individuals looking for a livelihood, the ever insatiable demands of consumers in our global economy, the complicity of governments and corporations, and the unscrupulous conduct of illegitimate labor recruiters play a catalytic role. International conflicts, underdevelopment and poverty, humanitarian emergencies, natural disasters, and other crises also create fertile ground for human traffickers and all those who benefit financially from it.

### **Momentum is Building to Address Human Trafficking and Modern-Day Slavery**

The will to address human trafficking and modern-day slavery is increasing each day. Federal legislation to address human trafficking in government contracting, business supply chains, and in the role of foreign labor recruiters has received support from many members of Congress. On September 25, President Obama announced several initiatives to address human trafficking and modern-day slavery. The Departments of Homeland Security and Transportation launched a new training program for transportation employees in October, the Department of Labor published the List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor in September, the State Department released the 2012 Annual Trafficking in Persons Report in June, and the U.S. Agency for International Development launched its Counter Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) policy earlier this year.

### **Despite Laws and Momentum to End Human Trafficking, Modern-Day Slavery Persists**

International human trafficking and forced labor affect every country in the world, and the United States is no exception. We are a leading destination country for the trafficking of foreign nationals in addition to having internal trafficking within our country. Earlier this year, the International Labor Organization (ILO) released its second global estimate of forced labor finding that 20.9 million are victims at any time meaning that three out of every 1,000 persons worldwide are in forced labor at any given point in time with women and girls representing 55% and men and boys 45%.<sup>1</sup> The ILO stated that the “estimate capture[d] the full realm of human trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation or what some call modern-day slavery.”<sup>2</sup>

Despite these staggering estimates of victimization, exploitation, and enslavement, we know that human trafficking evades discovery and that trafficking victims are rarely identified or helped. In fact, only 41,210 trafficking victims were identified around the globe in 2011, only a fraction (less

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<sup>1</sup> ILO Global Estimate of Forced Labour (2012), [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms\\_182004.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_182004.pdf), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Id.

than 1%) of the 20.9 million victims in the world at any time, according to the 2012 U.S. Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP Report).<sup>3</sup>

International trafficking and forced labor directly impacts the U.S. In the U.S, the National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline (NHTRC), operated by Polaris Project, has received more than 60,000 calls and identified more than 7,000 potential human trafficking victims.<sup>4</sup> Of that total, the NHTRC identified 3,098 cases referencing foreign national victims in the U.S. from scores of countries, including the top ten countries of Mexico, China, the Philippines, Russia, Vietnam, South Korea, India, Thailand, Guatemala, and El Salvador (in that order). The NHTRC has also fielded 469 reports of potential trafficking cases around the world in over 97 countries including the top ten countries of Mexico, Canada, the Philippines, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, Russia, Thailand, Colombia, China, and Malaysia (in that order). Foreign national victims most frequently requested comprehensive services including transitional and long-term housing (65%), legal services (41%), and emergency shelter (22%). We must do all we can to respond to these needs and I will make recommendations to this effect later in my testimony.

In 2011 alone, the NHTRC identified 2,945 trafficking victims. Of those 2,945 victims, 1,461 were sex trafficking victims, 497 were labor trafficking victims, 58 were both sex and labor trafficking, and 149 were not specified.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, we received 848 calls from victims of labor exploitation, which are not captured in the 2,945 figure.<sup>6</sup> Taken together, we have concluded that 48% of our cases involve some form of labor exploitation or trafficking and 52% involve sex trafficking.<sup>7</sup> The five most common types of labor trafficking were domestic work, restaurant/food services, small business, agriculture, and construction.<sup>8</sup> We must do more to prevent labor trafficking in these arenas in addition to effectively responding when such cases are identified. Additional information about calls to the NHTRC is available in the 2011 NHTRC Annual Report, which is attached to this testimony.<sup>9</sup>

### **Preventing Human Trafficking and Modern-Day Slavery**

In the more than ten years since the passage of the TVPA, we have improved our response to human trafficking, but we still have miles to go to prevent the exploitation and enslavement of vulnerable populations who often fall prey to traffickers and labor recruiters. The National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline (NHTRC) has received calls highlighting the abuses in the H-1B, H-2A, H-2B, A-3, G-5, J-1, H-3, K-1, and D-1 visa programs.

#### *Evidence of Exploitation and Enslavement in U.S. Visa Programs*

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<sup>3</sup> U.S. Trafficking in Persons Report (2012), <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/192587.pdf>, p. 44

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.polarisproject.org/resources/hotline-statistics>

<sup>5</sup> [https://na4.salesforce.com/sfc/p/300000006E4S11Sv6mFa.D\\_CBI0UueofejFjNl0=](https://na4.salesforce.com/sfc/p/300000006E4S11Sv6mFa.D_CBI0UueofejFjNl0=)

<sup>6</sup> Id.

<sup>7</sup> Id.

<sup>8</sup> Id.

<sup>9</sup> Id.

The NHTRC has identified 535 H2-A cases of labor exploitation or trafficking, including 14 labor trafficking cases that occurred in an agricultural setting, and one labor trafficking case in a factory setting involving Mexican and other Latin American nationals.<sup>10</sup> The remaining 520 cases involved labor exploitation ranging from wage and hour violations to more severe exploitation.<sup>11</sup> The NHTRC has identified 855 H-2B cases of labor exploitation or trafficking including 38 labor trafficking cases in an agricultural, construction, carnival, small business, or factory settings involving Mexican, Filipino, and other Latin American nationals. The remaining 817 cases involved labor exploitation ranging from wage and hour violations to more severe exploitation.<sup>12</sup>

Polaris Project has provided comprehensive services to a number of foreign national victims in the U.S. on H-1B visas whose traffickers used the visas to lure their victims into forced labor. Take the case of Alvin, who dreamed of coming to the United States to teach Science. He taught in the Philippines for 12 years. A friend told him about a recruiter in the Philippines who could help them apply for an H-1B visa to teach in the United States; however they would need to pay \$15,000 USD for the application process. Alvin knew that it was a lot of money up front, but was told he could earn triple that within a year. He was so excited to follow his dream while being able to provide for his family, including his mother, wife and three young children. Alvin sold his property and took out a loan to pay for the application process. He was eventually granted the H-1B visa to teach in a middle school in Pennsylvania.

When Alvin arrived in Philadelphia, he was told to get on a bus to Washington, D.C. as the position in Pennsylvania was no longer available. Confused and scared, Alvin made his way to D.C. When he arrived here, the recruiter brought him to a small, unfurnished apartment with 14 other teachers. He told them the schools no longer needed them and they would instead be working in day jobs when the recruiter needed them. Alvin immediately worried about the significant loans he had taken out and wondered how he would be able to support his family. He tried approaching the recruiter to ask for assistance finding a different full-time job or to help him get home to the Philippines. The recruiter told him he would not help and showed him his gun. He told Alvin that if he ever asked for assistance again or talked to law enforcement officials, he would go back to the Philippines and kill Alvin's son.

Alvin lost all hope at that point. He knew he would not be able to earn enough money with occasional day jobs to pay back his debt and support his family, but believed he had no other choice after the recruiter threatened his family. After five months, one of the other teachers in the apartment ran away and was introduced to Polaris Project staff through a community member. Alvin secretly stayed in touch with the teacher, who then helped him to leave as well. Alvin has now been working with Polaris Project's Client Services Department for more than a year. He is working in a retail store and preparing his T-visa application with the help of a pro bono attorney. While he has

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<sup>10</sup> Id.

<sup>11</sup> Id.

<sup>12</sup> Id.

not yet achieved his dream of teaching in the United States, he is hopeful that he will receive his T-visa and be able to apply for teaching jobs in the area.

The NHTRC has also received more than 150 calls from A-3 and G-5 visa holders working for diplomats and employees of international organizations as domestic servants who were experiencing human trafficking or other types of exploitation. For example, Rubina was recruited from her home in Southeast Asia as a domestic servant for a Middle Eastern family in Qatar. After working for them for several years, suffering threats and physical abuse, the family brought her with them to the United States, saying she was a family member and withholding all her documents after passing through U.S. Customs. Working long hours for a fragment of what she was owed, Rubina was not allowed to leave or talk to her family on the phone.

A concerned neighbor called the NHTRC hotline and Polaris Project call specialists provided detailed information to federal and local law enforcement about Rubina's situation. Polaris Project was able to coordinate with federal law enforcement and provide immediate on-scene services to Rubina when she was extradited from her trafficking situation. Rubina hopes to return and be reunited with her family in her home country once she has finished assisting federal prosecutors with the case. The NHTRC has received hundreds of calls from J-1 visa holders on the work and travel program who were experiencing human trafficking or other types of exploitation at summer camps, amusement parks, and other seasonal businesses. A particularly troubling case was that of a warehouse operator and a temporary staffing agency, subcontractors for the Hershey Company. The J-1 sponsor, the Council for Educational Travel, USA, brought foreign students to the U.S. for summer jobs working long hours under harsh conditions and earned approximately \$1/hour.<sup>13</sup> The Department of Labor awarded back-wages to the workers and the subcontractors were fined for health and safety violations.<sup>14</sup>

### *Recommendations to Prevent Human Trafficking and Modern-Day Slavery*

Given this evidence of exploitation and enslavement, the U.S. government must take further action to prevent human trafficking and modern-day slavery. We recommend the following actions:

First, the Departments of Homeland Security and Labor should conduct a comprehensive review of the H-1B, H-2A, H-2B, A-3, G-5, J-1, H-3, K-1, and D-1 visa categories with input from service providers working directly with trafficking victims to ensure that these visas are as "trafficking proof" as they can be. These departments should also review programs designed to facilitate the employment of foreign nationals, legal permanent residents, and U.S. citizens in domestic and agricultural work and to make recommendations to ensure these workers understand their rights and the risks of human trafficking and exploitation in the particular employment sector they are entering.

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<sup>13</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/02/us/company-firm-banned-in-effort-to-protect-foreign-students.html?\\_r=1&hpw](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/02/us/company-firm-banned-in-effort-to-protect-foreign-students.html?_r=1&hpw)

<sup>14</sup> Id.

Second, the U.S. government should take steps to prevent human trafficking among domestic workers by promoting the ratification and implementation of the International Labour Organization Convention on Domestic Workers (2011). This convention is aimed at improving the working conditions of tens of millions of domestic workers around the globe and would aid in the prevention of human trafficking of such workers. We should also encourage states to pass legislation in line with California Domestic Worker Bill of Rights that ensure that domestic workers are entitled to basic labor protections including overtime pay, meal and rest breaks, and adequate sleeping conditions for live-in workers.<sup>15</sup>

Third, the U.S. Congress should support legislation that ensures oversight and accountability of foreign labor recruiters. Such legislation would aid in the prevention of human trafficking through the elimination of all recruitment fees and information to workers to make them less vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. This could be accomplished either in the TVPA reauthorization or as stand-alone legislation.

Fourth, the U.S. government should ensure the effective implementation of the President's recent Executive Order on government procurement. The order outlines prohibitions on trafficking-related activities that will apply to all federal contractors and subcontractors, requires compliance measures for large overseas contracts and subcontracts, and provides federal agencies with additional tools to foster compliance.

Fifth, Congress should prevent trafficking by encouraging greater corporate transparency by supporting the reintroduction and passage of the "Business Transparency on Trafficking and Slavery Act" (formerly H.R. 2759 in the 112th Congress). This bipartisan bill would require very large businesses to disclose what steps, if any, they are taking to eliminate these human rights abuses within their supply chains, labor recruitment practices, and use of goods and services.

Sixth, the U.S. government should continue its efforts to ensure that imported agricultural products do not involve child or forced labor. To model best behavior, the U.S. should commit to joining the Fair Food Initiative in its procurement of certain agricultural products here in the U.S.

Finally, we should all continue to support projects like Slavery Footprint, Free2Work and Made in a Free World. These tools help to provide consumers with information on human trafficking, forced labor and other forms of modern slavery so that they can make educated purchasing decisions.

### **Responding to and Protecting Survivors of Human Trafficking and Modern-Day Slavery**

Today at Polaris Project, we are serving 73 survivors of human trafficking and modern-day slavery, 60 of whom are foreign nationals. Some of these clients have received a form of temporary immigration relief called "Continued Presence," others have received T-Visas or U-Visas, many have been certified by the Department of Health and Human Services which grants adult foreign victims of human trafficking access to federal benefits and services to the same extent as refugees. While I

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.domesticworkers.org/ca-bill-of-rights>

would like to say that we have been able to walk with every survivor we meet until they find freedom, dignity, and independence; this would not be true. We have experienced the grief of a survivor's death, and the deportation and dashed hopes of many more. Clearly, more can still be done to ensure that we better respond to those whose exploitation and enslavement we did not prevent. We don't lack the knowledge, only the resolve and the resources to address them.

#### *Evidence that More Can Still Be Done to Respond to and Protect Survivors*

I would like to share the story of one foreign national survivor of labor trafficking to illustrate these points. Jennifer, a 30-year old Guatemalan woman, came to the U.S. five years ago with the dream of providing her two children with a good education and her ailing mother with proper medical attention. She wanted to find a job working in a restaurant or as a housekeeper in order to be able to send money to her family back home. She learned about a job working as a waitress at a restaurant in Virginia. Jennifer explained that at first the restaurant owner and staff were welcoming. Because Jennifer had nowhere to live, the restaurant owner allowed her to sleep in a room at the back of the restaurant in exchange for a very low wage.

However, things quickly changed. Within two months the owner fired the cook and the other waitress. Jennifer was coerced into working 14 hours shifts every day, preparing the food, cleaning the restaurant and serving patrons. Jennifer felt she had no other choice because she did not have a support network to turn to and was not able to communicate well in English. She was in this situation for 8-9 months until one day during an undercover police operation at the restaurant she was able to ask for help from the police officers. Jennifer explained her situation to the police officer including the constant verbal and psychological abuse by the restaurant owner.

Whether or not a situation like this one will end in freedom and dignity for a foreign national labor trafficking survivor depends on many factors: a national hotline and referral mechanism for identifying victims and cases, law enforcement trained to identify and respond appropriately to human trafficking, emergency and long-term supportive services, the availability of immigration relief, the ability to find and secure gainful employment and education, and so much more. Before I tell you how Jennifer's story ends, let me describe how we might prevent trafficking and highlight the challenges we face when assisting foreign national trafficking victims.

#### *Additional Recommendations to Better Respond to Human Trafficking and Modern-Day Slavery*

Mr. Co-Chairmen, the challenges we face in working with foreign national victims of labor trafficking and forced labor include identification of trafficking victims, and protection of these victims once identified through the provision of housing, and access to benefits and comprehensive services, including legal services. What follows are our recommendations for how the U.S. government may better help to address these challenges in partnership with us.

First, we must identify the 99% of trafficking victims who remain invisible and isolated. As noted earlier, only 41,210 trafficking victims were identified around the globe in 2011, only a fraction (less than 1%) of the 20.9 million victims in the world at any time. We have begun to do more to identify

trafficking victims in the U.S. and around the world through successful models like the State Department's "Know Your Rights" pamphlet, which educates employment-based visa holders about the risks of human trafficking and about resources available to assist them. Since this brochure was published, the National Human Trafficking Resource Center has received more than 3,000 calls attributable to it being distributed to visa holders entering the United States. The Departments of State, Justice, Homeland Security, and Health and Human Services should convene a working group to discuss the expansion of the preventative concept behind the highly successful "Know Your Rights" brochure with other vulnerable populations such as migrant and domestic workers who do not enjoy broad legal protections.

We must also do more to ensure that we increase the percentage of victims identified by training government officials working in all sectors. We must identify victims and direct them to service providers rather than arrest, charge, prosecute or deport them because of criminal or administrative violations incident to their trafficking situations. To date, DHS is the only federal law enforcement agency that has developed and instituted agency-wide training for agents most likely to encounter human trafficking. Before the close of 2013, the Administration should ensure that the Departments of Justice, Labor, State, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission develop and roll out agency-wide trainings. Similarly, Health and Human Services (HHS) should also ensure that any social services staff likely to encounter victims or survivors of trafficking, are trained regarding prevention, identification and appropriate response.

Second, we must provide safety in the form of secure housing for survivors like Jennifer. We must provide emergency, transitional, and long-term housing so that survivors are safe and not vulnerable and exposed to traffickers. Between January and June 2012, Polaris Project conducted a survey of anti-trafficking organizations providing shelter services with the goal of estimating the total number of shelter beds available to human trafficking survivors in the United States. 678 beds are specifically and exclusively designated for human trafficking survivors, and they would remain empty if not used by this population. 525 (approximately 77%) of these beds are restricted to sex trafficking survivors, leaving only 153 beds available to labor trafficking survivors (measured against a minimum of 497 labor trafficking victims identified by the NHTRC in 2011 alone).<sup>16</sup> Housing stabilizes trafficking survivors and creates a sense of safety that allows them to begin to rebuild their lives. We clearly need more housing for trafficking survivors particularly for labor trafficking survivors like Jennifer.

Third, foreign national trafficking victims need means of survival. In the immediate days, weeks, and months after being trafficked, survivors need access to benefits and services which are directly linked to certification as a trafficking victim by the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). ORR certifies foreign national victims and provides letters of eligibility to foreign national minors (under 18) so that they are eligible for federal and State benefits and services to the same extent as refugees.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.polarisproject.org/resources/tools-for-service-providers-and-law-enforcement/shelter-bed-report>



As one of two government agencies responsible for trafficking victim services, the Department of Health and Human Services should develop a comprehensive department-wide strategy on combatting human trafficking, and ensure that victim service strategies provide specific and dedicated funds for programs that meet the unique needs of trafficked persons, regardless of age or nationality. HHS and DOJ should ensure the seamless delivery of services whether a victim is first provided with benefits and services through HHS or DOJ and vice versa.

Finally, foreign national survivors need assistance in the form legal services, including for immigration issues related to their trafficking situations. Thanks to the TVPA, several types of immigration relief are available to trafficking victims including temporary immigration relief or “Continued Presence,” and long-term immigration relief in the form of T-Visas, U-Visas, and in some cases VAWA and asylum, all of which provide a sense of stability for survivors.

#### *Temporary Immigration Relief*

Continued Presence (CP) is a one-year form of immigration relief that federal law enforcement officials request on behalf of a victim of a severe form of trafficking who is also a potential witness. To qualify, the individual need not cooperate with law enforcement. Continued Presence allows the victim to remain in the United States during the course of an investigation or prosecution as well as obtain an Employment Authorization Document (EAD).<sup>17</sup> Despite this low bar, we are aware of a number of labor trafficking cases where the survivor clearly meets the definition of a victim of the severe form of trafficking, is a potential witness, and has cooperated with law enforcement even though not required that have not been granted CP.

All law enforcement officials must be trained and properly instructed on the standards for CP. In fact, in August 2010 and January 2012, the Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking (ATEST), of which Polaris Project is a member, requested that DHS do more to ensure the use of CP in appropriate cases. ATEST was and remains concerned that there is not sufficient information and guidance available to the public or law enforcement on CP causing the number of instances of when continued presence is granted to decline. The Department of Homeland Security has provided a public pamphlet on the topic and an internal protocol for law enforcement agencies; however, we are not confident this is sufficient and would welcome the opportunity to provide feedback on the law enforcement protocol.

In addition, the Department of Homeland Security should review and revise its policies and procedures to ensure that continued presence is granted in a timely manner and in line with its original purpose as an investigative tool. We recommend that CP be granted within one month of application. We also recommend considering expanding the group of actors who are authorized to request CP pursuant to 22 USC § 7105(c)(3)(A)(i). U.S. Department of Labor personnel and local law enforcement are two additional groups that could benefit from being able to directly request CP given their frequent interaction with victims of labor exploitation or trafficking.

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/resource/fact-sheet-certification-for-adult-victims-of-trafficking>

### *Long-Term Immigration Relief*

Long-term immigration relief and the possibility of permanent residency through the T-visa is also a critical way to establish stability for trafficking victims. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) recognizes that returning victims to their country of origin is often not in their best interest, and that victims need the opportunity to rebuild their lives without fear of deportation, which is often threatened by traffickers. The TVPA created the T-visa, a nonimmigrant status that allows a foreign victim of human trafficking to remain in the United States for up to four years. The law also allows certain members of a T-visa holder's family to apply for derivative T-visa status. A trafficking victim may be eligible for a T-visa if he/she: (1) Is or was a victim of trafficking, as defined by law; (2) Is in the United States, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, or at a port of entry due to trafficking; (3) Complies with any reasonable request from a law enforcement agency for assistance in the investigation or prosecution of human trafficking (or is are under the age of 18, or unable to cooperate due to physical or psychological trauma); (4) Demonstrates that he/she would suffer extreme hardship involving unusual and severe harm if removed from the United States; and (5) Is admissible to the United States or obtains a waiver of admissibility.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the availability of the T-Visa at a cap of 5,000 per year, in fiscal year 2011, only 557 victims were granted this visa.<sup>19</sup> To ensure that the maximum number of foreign national trafficking victims have access to this form of immigration relief and protection, the Department of Homeland Security should review and revise regulations, policies and procedures to ensure that human trafficking victims who have reported their exploitation and enslavement are presumed to have cooperated with law enforcement for the purposes of qualifying for a T Visa pursuant to 8 USC § 1101.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Let me tell you how Jennifer's story ends or shall I say begins because her case illustrates when the system responds successfully – when an individual is provided with safe housing, a means of survival, and stability through immigration relief; but even more importantly her case illustrates how freedom and dignity begin.

The police officer who encountered Jennifer recognized the human trafficking indicators and referred her to a local shelter that contacted Polaris Project for emergency services. With the help of Polaris Project, Jennifer was able to secure shelter and food through our transitional housing program. Having safe housing greatly helped her be able to focus on her other needs and goals. During this time she participated in our job and computer skills training program, was able to receive proper medical attention as well as mental health counseling. Jennifer was also granted Continued Presence which allowed her to find a stable job as a cook.

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<sup>18</sup><http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.eb1d4c2a3e5b9ac89243c6a7543f6d1a/?vgnextoid=02ed3e4d77d73210VgnVCM100000082ca60aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=02ed3e4d77d73210VgnVCM100000082ca60aRCRD>

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Trafficking in Persons Report (2012), <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/192598.pdf>, p. 362.

Polaris Project staff also referred her to an intensive English language skills program; as a result, she can now understand and read English well enough to communicate her needs and to advocate for herself. Since then she has secured her own housing and has been living independently while supporting her mother and children in her home country. Furthermore, with a renewed sense of self-confidence she has actively participated in the investigation against her former employer who was just prosecuted this past year on charges of human smuggling and trafficking. Jennifer has found her voice and is also now advocating on behalf of others who have gone through similar situations. With the help of a pro bono attorney secured by Polaris Project Jennifer's T-visa application was submitted in August 2012 and she is now awaiting her decision.

Mr. Co-Chairmen, thank you for holding this hearing at a time when our struggle to prevent and respond to human trafficking and modern-day slavery could not be more critical. We are fast approaching the 150th anniversary of the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation. As Ambassador-at-Large for Trafficking in Persons Louis CdeBaca frequently notes, we must still fulfill the promise of that proclamation and of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to our Constitution to create a world without slavery. Yet, as we sit here today, the premier piece of U.S. federal legislation to address the issue here at home and around the world – the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) – is more than a year overdue for reauthorization.

Polaris Project and our partner organizations here in the U.S. and around the world have been able to identify, assist, and walk alongside courageous survivors like Jennifer because the U.S. has created a framework to combat human trafficking that seeks to protect trafficking victims, prevent human trafficking and prosecute human traffickers at home and around the world, albeit imperfect and in need of improvements to address the role of labor recruiters, corporate and government supply chains, and more. We are eager to work with you to make these improvements to our trafficking in persons laws because they stand as a model for the rest of the world and most importantly, because these laws create the road back to freedom and dignity for survivors of human trafficking and modern-day slavery.

Thank you.