



Department of Justice

STATEMENT OF

**JOSE A. PEREZ
DEPUTY ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIVE DIVISION
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION**

**BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE LAW
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
UNITED STATES SENATE**

**AT A HEARING ENTITLED
"PROTECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF FOSTER CHILDREN"**

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Prepared for Jose A. Perez
Deputy Assistant Director, Criminal Investigative Division
Federal Bureau of Investigation

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Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law

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Introduction

Good afternoon, Chairman Ossoff, Ranking Member Blackburn, and Members of the Subcommittee, and thank you for inviting me here today to have an important discussion about a crime that is present throughout the country and the world—Human Trafficking, including the Sex Trafficking and Exploitation of children.

My name is Jose Perez. I am a Deputy Assistant Director within the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Criminal Investigative Division, or CID. In my position I oversee various investigative programs for the FBI, including Violent Crime and Gangs, Transnational Organized Crime, as well as Crimes Against Children and Human Trafficking, which I'll focus on today.

We at the FBI have no more important task than protecting the most vulnerable among us—especially children—so this work is a priority in all of our 56 Field Offices across the country. But we can't stop Human Trafficking alone, so we partner closely with numerous federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies as well as non-governmental agencies and non-profits on the front lines to address the threat across all angles and provide victim assistance as one coordinated team.

What is Human Trafficking?

Human Trafficking, or trafficking in persons, is a crime in which a person is exploited for labor, services, or commercial sex acts. It occurs in every region of the United States and throughout the world, and is perpetrated by an array of actors—from individual criminals to more structured criminal organizations. Often, trafficking occurs together with other criminal conduct, such as financial crimes, narcotics trafficking, online child sexual exploitation, sextortion, and other types of violence.

Sex Trafficking of adults includes the recruitment, solicitation, and transportation of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex facilitated through force, fraud, or coercion. Any exploitation of a minor for commercial sex is Human Trafficking and Child Sex Trafficking does not need to involve any type of physical force or coercion.

Similarly, Labor Trafficking also includes the recruitment, harboring, and transportation of a person, but for the purpose of subjection to forced labor or involuntary servitude. Labor trafficking can occur in any industry and is prevalent in agriculture, domestic work, construction, landscaping, factories and manufacturing.

Human traffickers come from a wide variety of backgrounds and demographic categories and are often times facilitated by criminal enterprises and transnational criminal organizations. Criminal enterprises often operate in plain sight and can go undetected for decades, affecting hundreds of victims before being identified. Victims often do not leave their situations because they fear their traffickers or have a distrust towards law enforcement, or a lack of understanding of their rights.

Trafficking can affect anyone regardless of age, race, sex, or ethnicity. Still, vulnerable populations tend to be at a higher risk of being trafficked. Traffickers can and will identify and exploit vulnerabilities, and they often control victims' resources, safety, living and working conditions. Traffickers can also have access to services that can exert power over their victims.

FBI Actions and Successes

The FBI investigates all forms of human trafficking, including child sex trafficking, regardless of the victim's age or nationality. But we can't do it alone. As I mentioned, we work with external partners—primarily with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), where we have personnel embedded—to not only identify and locate victims but also hold those who victimized them accountable. Social welfare agencies are often some of our best partners in identifying trafficking schemes as well. We collaborate with these organizations through multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs), which are comprised of different entities working together to coordinate forensic interviews, medical exams, counseling, and other services.

Additionally, we combat Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation by working with our federal, state, and local partners through our more than 85 FBI Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Task Forces nationwide consisting of approximately 800 task force officers

This approach has yielded many positive results. Just this month, a Los Angeles man was sentenced to life in prison for recruiting teenage girls and an adult for commercial sex work. The subject advertised victims for commercial sex on various websites, and facilitated responses to online ads by arranging in-person meetings with the victims. The subject victimized at least three minor girls and used threats of force and coercion to traffic a young adult – all for his own profit. The FBI Los Angeles Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Task Force coordinated with multiple law enforcement partners and the NCMEC throughout this case.

Still, we're working to build more relationships and provide training to more private organizations, because awareness is key, and the problem isn't contained—each of the FBI's 56 Field Offices have received complaints regarding human trafficking. We're also part of the ongoing DOJ Forced Labor Initiative Working Group, as well as other working groups aimed at executing the White House's National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking. We also have an entire division devoted to Victim Services, and a cadre of Victim Specialists who are key to integrating victim-centered services into all of our federal investigations.

Conclusion

Members of the Subcommittee, we appreciate your support in this area, your time today spent discussing this important issue, and your continued assistance in helping us combat this threat.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you, and I'm happy to any answer any questions you may have on this topic.