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**Attorney General Steve Marshall and Montgomery Family Sunshine Center
Announce Alabama Anti Human Trafficking Alliance Funded by
U.S. Department of Justice Award**

*Alliance to Include U.S. Attorney's Offices for Northern, Middle and Southern Districts,
Homeland Security Investigations, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Family Sunshine Center,
Wellhouse, Ashakiran, West Alabama Human Trafficking Task Force and Poarch Band of Creek
Indians*

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Steve Marshall and the Montgomery Family Sunshine Center announced they will lead a multiagency alliance of state, federal and nongovernmental partners to combat human trafficking in Alabama. Funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, the Alabama Anti Human Trafficking Alliance will share investigative resources to interdict and prosecute human traffickers in Alabama and provide assistance to victims.

“Human trafficking is a modern form of slavery. It is a truly heinous crime, committed in the shadows – and in plain sight,” said Attorney General Marshall. “Through force, fraud, and coercion, traffickers push their victims into demeaning forms of abuse, from sexual exploitation to domestic servitude. The victims are not limited to women and children, but include members of every age, sex, and demographic.

“I am committed to ending human trafficking in Alabama, and have made it a top priority as Attorney General to do so,” Attorney General Marshall continued. “The Alabama Anti Human Trafficking Alliance will marshal the vast expertise and resources of state and federal law-enforcement agencies and nongovernmental groups, forming a united and powerful front in fighting this scourge on our society.

“Today’s announcement serves as a reminder to human traffickers that the promise I made them on a past Human Trafficking Awareness Day remains as true as ever: We are coming after you – and we will only become more relentless until the day we end human trafficking in Alabama.”

In October, the Alabama Attorney General’s Office, as the lead law enforcement unit, and the Montgomery Family Sunshine Center, as the lead victim service provider, were awarded \$2,900,455 in federal funding for a period of three years to create a task force to combat human trafficking statewide.



On Monday, Attorney General Marshall and the Montgomery Family Sunshine Center joined with the U.S. Attorney's Offices for Northern, Middle and Southern Districts, Homeland Security Investigations, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Wellhouse, Ashakiran Inc., West Alabama Human Trafficking Task Force, and Poarch Band of Creek Indians in signing a memorandum of understanding officially authorizing their partnership in the newly created Alabama Anti Human Trafficking Alliance.

Under the new partnership, which includes both law enforcement and well-established nongovernmental nonprofit victim service agencies, jurisdictional loopholes in capturing and prosecuting human traffickers will be closed, and victims will be afforded much-needed short-term and long-term support services.

The Attorney General's Office will provide a special agent to proactively investigate human trafficking cases statewide and provide support to law enforcement in investigating and prosecuting cases. The Office will also make available an assistant attorney general for case investigative guidance, victim and witness advocacy, and will coordinate data and law enforcement committee meetings.

Tay Knight, Executive Director, Family Sunshine Center: "While law enforcement has demonstrated a commitment to fight human tracking across the State, they often encounter difficulty in locating the comprehensive victim services necessary to help survivors heal from their trauma and access resources necessary to move forward with real hope for the future. Family Sunshine Center is committed to partnering with Ashakiran, The Wellhouse, and other victim service providers across Alabama to increase access to crisis intervention services, including emergency shelter, residential services, counseling, and case management services for survivors of human trafficking. This funding will grant the Alabama Anti Human Trafficking Alliance the opportunity to conduct a statewide assessment to determine the areas and populations most at risk of trafficking, and the collaboration this project promotes will be invaluable to addressing the issue of trafficking within our State."

U.S. Attorney Prim F. Escalona, Northern District of Alabama: "Combating human trafficking in the Northern District of Alabama is a top priority of our office. This collaborative partnership is exactly what the Department of Justice grant is intended to support. Our office looks forward to working with the Alabama Anti-Human Trafficking Alliance to assist victims and combat human trafficking throughout the State of Alabama."

U.S. Attorney Louis Franklin, Middle District of Alabama: "My office is dedicated to stamping out human trafficking, and we welcome this opportunity to expand our existing partnerships with law enforcement to continue to prosecute those who take part in this horrible crime," stated U.S. Attorney Louis V. Franklin, Sr. "The victims of human trafficking often suffer in ways that are difficult to imagine occurring in this country. They are forced to work for little or no wages, condemned to live in sub-standard conditions, and even coerced into prostitution, sometimes at a very young age."

All of us must work together to end this practice in Alabama and to punish those who would perpetrate it.”

Special Agent in Charge Katrina W. Berger, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) operations Georgia and Alabama: “The exploitation of the world’s most vulnerable residents through forced labor or commercial sex for financial gain is one of the most extreme and despicable examples of human depravity. The trauma endured by survivors of these crimes lasts a lifetime and without intervention, often leads to tragic consequences. Homeland Security Investigations, using its trauma-informed and victim-centered approach, is committed to working collaboratively with our partners to combat this despicable crime, help victims and bring offenders to justice.”

FBI Birmingham Special Agent in Charge Johnnie Sharp Jr.: “The most effective way to investigate human trafficking is through a collaborative, multi-agency approach with our federal, state, local and tribal partners. The FBI remains committed to working with our partners in combating this heinous crime that exploits the most vulnerable in society.”

FBI Mobile Special Agent in Charge, James Jewell: “The issue of human trafficking is too widespread for one single agency to tackle alone. The partnerships forged in this agreement will ensure no stone is left unturned and more importantly the victims of these horrible crimes will receive the much-needed assistance they deserve. FBI Mobile looks forward to this endeavor with our law enforcement and civilian partners.”

Carolyn Potter, CEO, The WellHouse: “With much excitement, The WellHouse welcomes the opportunity to strengthen our existing support and services to survivors of human trafficking by partnering with the newly created Alabama Anti Human Trafficking Alliance; we look forward to much overall success through this endeavor.”

Veleda M. Davis, Executive Director, AshaKiran Inc: “As stated by Attorney General Marshall, ‘Human trafficking is a modern form of slavery, committed in the shadows and in plain sight.’ AshaKiran is committed to promote awareness of human trafficking, along with supporting survivors of such trauma. AshaKiran provides culturally sensitive crises services to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. We strive to be “A Ray of Hope” for survivors of crime across the State of Alabama.”

Lt. Darren Beams, West Alabama Human Trafficking Task Force: “We are honored to be asked to join this alliance. Attorney General Marshall has been a huge supporter of our task force and we know that he shares our views on eradicating human trafficking in our state. We are looking forward to supporting this alliance in any way that we can.”

Stephanie Bryan, Tribal Chair & CEO on behalf of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians:

“We applaud the measures that Attorney General Marshall is taking to combat human trafficking in our State, and we are wholeheartedly committed to being active and engaged partners in the Alabama Anti Human Trafficking Alliance. Working with our partners, we will use our tribal resources in this collective effort aimed at preventing, detecting, and thwarting human trafficking in Alabama. ”

Each year, millions of men, women and children are victimized by human traffickers worldwide. While dozens of cases are reported annually in Alabama, it is believed the actual number of victims is much higher as most cases go unreported.

Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act. Victims are found in legitimate and illegitimate labor industries, including sweatshops, massage parlors, agricultural fields, restaurants, hotels and domestic service.

To report suspected human trafficking, contact your local law enforcement agency, or the U.S. Homeland Security Investigations Tip line at **1-866-347-2423**.