Action Alert

As the legislature prepares to return in January to begin the 2024 Legislative Session, **now** is the time to talk with your lawmakers about NAHT's 2024 legislative priorities!

Background:

The Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking and Slavery (NAHT) is Iowa's first and remains the only statewide volunteer non-profit organization devoted exclusively to ending human trafficking in all its forms. For the past three years, NAHT has been advocating for the legislature to allocate $5 million in state funding to provide rehabilitative services and supports for trafficking victims. **Currently Iowa does not allocate any funds to support victims of human trafficking.**

Human trafficking is more prevalent in Iowa than ever before as traffickers use social media platforms to identify and target their victims remotely and the Iowa DHHS reports that child sex trafficking incidents **more than doubled** from 2020 to 2021 and **Iowa is the center stage**.

It's time for policy makers to recognize trafficking ***is*** happening in our backyard and make a meaningful expenditure to reduce its footprint in Iowa. Unfortunately, we know it is happening in urban and rural communities across our state. Iowa is not going to be able to stop these heinous acts if we don't make a significant investment in the programs serving the victims of these crimes, just as 15 other states are doing.

The 26 Iowa programs providing services to victims of human trafficking operate on shoestring budgets with contributions made from supporters and some federal funding. These agencies are often volunteer run, stretched thin, and find it impossible to meet the service demands without financial resources dedicated to serving these trafficked victims. It's going to take us all working together to curb this epidemic, including the state of Iowa to make a financial contribution. An appropriation of $5 million is needed to make a difference!

Next Steps: Take Action!

- Contact your Senator and Representative with the message below.
- Ask your family members, church members, and community groups to contact their legislators with the same message.
- Attend a town hall meeting, public forum, or legislative coffee. These are regularly held in the district and are published in your local paper. This is a great way to discuss the issue and generate public support.

Mobilize:

Please call or email your local Senator and Representative. Please reference the sample letter below and attached talking points to craft your message and answer questions.

Find Your Legislators:

Please find their contact information by entering your address at the following link:
https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find

WE HIGHLY ENCOURAGE *you to personalize the message below by identifying where you live and specific reasons for requesting this funding.*

Support Funding for Human Trafficking Victim Services

Request: Allocate Funding for Human Trafficking Victim Services.
The Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking and Slavery requests the Iowa Legislature allocate **$5 million** in state funding for human trafficking victim services in the Justice Systems budget. Currently Iowa does not allocate any state funds to support victims of human trafficking.

Human trafficking is more prevalent in Iowa than ever before.
In 2020, the National Human Trafficking Hotline reported a 125% increase in reports of recruitment into trafficking through Facebook and a 95% increase in reports of recruitment on Instagram compared to the previous year. DHHS reports that child sex trafficking incidents more than doubled from 2020 to 2021 and Iowa is the center stage.

Human trafficking is happening in urban and rural communities across our state. Iowa is not going to be able to stop these heinous acts if we don't make a significant investment in the programs serving the victims of these crimes, just as 15 other states are doing.

Inadequate state funds mean fewer staff and fewer victims are served.
The 26 Iowa programs providing services to victims of human trafficking operate on shoestring budgets with contributions made from supporters and some federal funding. These agencies are often volunteer-run, stretched thin, and find it impossible to meet the service demands without financial resources dedicated to serving these trafficked victims.

Our promise to trafficking victims must be clear: when you come forward for help and support, it will be available. Unfortunately, due to no state funding, cuts in federal funding, increased demand for services, and ongoing unmet needs, human trafficking victim service provider agencies are struggling to meet the needs of victims, leaving many with nowhere to turn for help.

Inadequate support for victims negatively impacts the whole community.
Human trafficking victims rely on victim service agencies to meet immediate needs, but post-crisis support services currently provided by programs are essential to long-term stability and without state funding, long-term support services will be cut. This has ripple effects negatively impacting entire communities and is more expensive in the long run as victims lacking long-term stability return for services again and again.

Consider that beyond the obvious importance of meeting crisis needs, when victim service provider agencies can help a trafficked victim avoid homelessness, maintain stable employment, and support children, it eases the workload of other community service providers. Assisting law enforcement and helping trafficking survivors navigate legal proceedings also enables the legal system to better serve victims.

Victims need support right now.
Human trafficking victims have comprehensive needs for food, housing, health care, child care, and employment. Victim service providers are stretched beyond capacity and cannot address the unmet need and increased demand for their services without state funding.

Supporting trafficked victims requires dedicated state investment in services.
Together, federal and private funds support the provision of services to trafficking victims. Federal funds can enhance program capacity to provide a broad range of services, but state funding will provide essential operational support for Iowa's human trafficking victim service provider network. Effectively supporting victims requires adequate and consistent state funds.

It's going to take us all working together to curb this epidemic.
Iowa does NOT currently invest any state funding to support victims of human trafficking. **An appropriation of $5 million is needed to make a difference to serve these victims of human trafficking.**

Support Funding for Human Trafficking Victim Services

Instructions for Extra Mobilization:
Please call or email your local Senator and Representative. Please reference the provided sample letter and talking points to craft your message and answer questions.

Find Your Legislators:
Please find their contact information by entering your address at the following link:
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Key legislators, who will be making decisions about the Justice Systems budget, have been identified and listed below. Please email these individuals as well as your own local Senator and Representative. We have included the email addresses for the key contacts. We also urge you to reach out to your local legislators.

Communicating with legislators will make all the difference! Let us know if you need any additional information.

Sen. Julian Garrett (Senate Justice Budget Chair) – julian.garrett@legis.iowa.gov
Sen. Todd Taylor (Senate Justice Budget Ranking Member) – todd.taylor@legis.iowa.gov
Sen. Tim Kraayenbrink (Senate Appropriations Chair) – tim.kraayenbrink@legis.iowa.gov
Sen. Janet Petersen (Senate Appropriations Ranking Member) – janet.petersen@legis.iowa.gov
Sen. Brad Zaun (Senate Judiciary Chair) – brad.zaun@legis.iowa.gov
Sen. Nate Boulton (Senate Judiciary Ranking Member) – nate.boulton@legis.iowa.gov
Rep. Brian Lohse (House Justice Budget Chair) – brian.lohse@legis.iowa.gov
Rep. Eric Gjerde (House Justice Budget Chair) – eric.gjerde@legis.iowa.gov
Rep. Steven Holt (House Judiciary Chair) – steven.holt@legis.iowa.gov
Rep. Ross Wilburn (House Judiciary Ranking Member) - ross.wilburn@legis.iowa.gov
Rep. Gary Mohr (House Appropriations Chair) – gary.mohr@legis.iowa.gov
Rep. Timi Brown-Powers (House Appropriations Ranking Member) – timi.brown-powers@legis.iowa.gov

Sample Letter

SUBJECT LINE: Invest in Services for Human Trafficking Victims

Dear Representative/Senator (Last Name),

I am writing as a concerned Iowan who knows human trafficking is happening in Iowa. Did you know the rate has **more than doubled** in Iowa from 2021 to 2022 and Iowa allocates NO state funding to provide services for trafficked victims?

It's time for the legislature to invest resources to combat this horrific crime happening in our small communities across the state. Iowa programs need $5 million in state funding to provide services and support statewide for victims of labor and human trafficking.

It's scary to think that these crimes happen in our backyard, but it is even more terrifying to know victims don't have anywhere to turn for help. [***Insert personal reasoning for supporting this funding increase***.]

Please be a voice for human trafficking victims in Iowa. Support an allocation of $5 million in state funding in the Justice System budget to ensure a future for trafficked victims. I hope I can count on your support.

Respectfully,
Your name
City/Phone/Email