



April 3rd, 2024

Hon. Mackenzie Kelly
District 6 Austin City Council
City Hall
301 W 2nd St., Suite 2117
Austin, 78701

Dear Council Members,

I am writing to express my support for the proposed city council resolution aimed at addressing the increasing cases of human trafficking within our community. As an organization that serves trafficking survivors, we know this is a longstanding issue that needs more attention and action, especially the prevention and education measure that is a focus of the proposed resolution.

While Asian Family Support Services of Austin (AFSSA) has supported survivors of trafficking for many years, our recent partnership with Austin Police Department's (APD) Human Trafficking Unit late last year has led to a notable increase in the number of cases our Sexual Violence team supports. In addition to offering culturally-grounded care to survivors who are scared and often navigating a largely unfamiliar justice system, as part of our MOU with APD, AFSSA is also supporting clients' immediate needs of safe shelter by providing hotel stays and connecting survivors with interpreters as they work with law enforcement. Many of the survivors are alone, have left behind all of their belongings, and need support with accessing basic needs such as phones and clothes. AFSSA is anticipating a need to ramp up our program to meet the high level of referrals we are receiving from our law enforcement partners, and is positioned to offer culturally-specific trainings to all city funded providers to build capacity to meet the needs of Asian victims of violence.

Human trafficking is a violation of human rights that affects individuals of all ages, genders, and backgrounds. It preys on the vulnerable, exploits the marginalized, and undermines our communities. The proposed resolution demonstrates a commitment to prioritizing the protection and support of survivors, enhancing efforts to raise public awareness, and fostering collaboration between the city, the community, and other organizations that are a part of the movement to break cycles of violence.

By endorsing this resolution, our city council will send a clear message that human trafficking will not be tolerated. We recommend that all members of the City Council, not only support this resolution, but also work collaboratively with relevant agencies, organizations, and community members to implement it.

Together, we can create a safer and more resilient community. Many thanks to the City Council for taking this crucial step towards combating human trafficking. We reaffirm our support for this important initiative and urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Zahra Shakur Jamal
Director of Community Education and Outreach

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