



**Joint testimony of**

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*before the*

**Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs**

**United States Senate**

**“Combating Human Trafficking: Federal, State, and Local Perspectives”**

*on*

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## **Introduction**

Good afternoon Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Chiesa and members of the Committee. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) welcomes and appreciates the opportunity to appear before the Committee. The men and women of DHS are dedicated to combating the heinous crime of human trafficking using the programs and authorities provided to us by Congress and the President. The Department's Blue Campaign coordinates and unites this work.

Before we discuss the specific initiatives of the Blue Campaign, we would like to recognize that fighting the hidden crime of human trafficking is a collaborative effort. DHS depends on strong partnerships with other federal agencies, foreign governments, international organizations, law enforcement, first responders, the faith-based community, non-profit organizations, the private sector, as well as our state, local, and tribal counterparts. The President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (PITF) and the Senior Policy Operating Group (SPOG) bring together federal departments and agencies, including DHS, to ensure a whole-of-government approach that addresses all aspects of human trafficking. DHS also co-chairs the SPOG victim services working group along with the Department of Justice and Health and Human Services, which is responsible for leading development of the Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking in the United States. We forged additional partnerships that unite and amplify our joint efforts. DHS greatly appreciates the collaboration and commitment of its partners.

## **Blue Campaign**

DHS is one of the lead federal law enforcement agencies responsible for investigating and preventing human trafficking. Our investigative authority, screening authority, and most of our assistance programs are authorized under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) and the subsequent reauthorizations.

DHS and its components work to combat human trafficking every day. U.S. Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) investigates both international and domestic human trafficking cases. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and ICE provide immigration relief to trafficking victims. The Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) provides training to law enforcement professionals on how to identify indicators of human trafficking and how to conduct human trafficking investigations. The Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) facilitates training and webinars to state and major urban area fusion centers on the signs and indicators of human trafficking and the April 18, 2013 Fusion Center protocol for reporting. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is in a unique position to detect trafficking on our borders, as are the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) on the high seas, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) at airports and mass transit facilities, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in disaster areas.

DHS unites these missions under the Blue Campaign to combat human trafficking. Blue is the international color of human trafficking awareness, and the Blue Campaign name references the global anti-human trafficking symbols of the Blue Heart and the Blue Blindfold, as well as the “thin blue line” of law enforcement. To increase awareness of this crime domestically and internationally, in June of 2010, Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano launched the Blue Campaign.

Before we talk about the Blue Campaign, we would like to share a story that demonstrates why DHS cares so deeply about human trafficking. When Shyima Hall was eight years old, her parents sold her into slavery. She was smuggled into the U.S. when she was ten years old. She worked as a domestic servant in Orange County, California, 16 hour days, scrubbing floors, cooking meals and cleaning house. She was rarely allowed outside. She never went to school. She never visited a doctor or dentist and did not speak English. When she was 13, a concerned neighbor called in a tip to law enforcement and ICE opened an investigation. Her captors were prosecuted, imprisoned and then deported. In 2012, Shyima became a U.S. citizen. She is now 23 years old and has said that her dream is to become an ICE Special Agent, in order to help others in similar situations. Shyima’s story helps us understand the important role the government can play in identifying, investigating and prosecuting human trafficking. However, we only found out about Shyima because a neighbor called in a tip. Human trafficking is a hidden crime—and every one of us needs to know the indicators to look for.

### **Training and Outreach**

The Blue Campaign was begun, and continues, with no direct appropriations, reflecting a belief that we are all more effective when we work collaboratively with our internal and external partners. Early in the campaign, we developed training to ensure that those in our workforce who encounter potential victims of human trafficking understood the indicators of trafficking. We also created specialized training for the federal contractor workforce. Federal regulations create a zero tolerance for government contractors who traffic persons. In response, DHS launched specialized training for acquisition officers about human trafficking that provides information about penalties for traffickers who execute business contracts with the U.S. Government.

We brought all of our components together to make sure our efforts increased identification of and assistance to victims of trafficking. As part of their efforts through the Blue Campaign, DHS components conduct trainings and webinars, produce informational videos, develop informational materials, provide victim assistance, conduct investigative efforts, and conduct outreach.

The Blue Campaign utilizes academic research to shape the focus of the campaign. A recent Northeastern University study noted that few municipal and county agencies had human trafficking training or investigated human trafficking cases. An Urban Institute study found a

significant lack of awareness among law enforcement and a lack of prioritization which resulted in many cases being passed over by state and county legal systems.

### *State and Local Outreach*

We created a specialized training to educate law enforcement officers at all levels on the indicators of human trafficking, how they can assist victims, and the resources available to them when investigating such cases. In addition, we developed training videos for state, local, county, tribal and territorial law enforcement to create awareness that immigration relief options are potentially available to foreign victims of human trafficking and how these benefits aid law enforcement in achieving successful investigations.

The Blue Campaign also works with our federal government colleagues, foreign governments, international organizations, law enforcement at all levels, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the faith-based community, the private sector, and the general public to share ideas and resources and build a force-multiplying network of diverse but complementary parts. Partnerships augment our efforts by bringing together diverse experiences, amplifying messages, and leveraging resources. Together we can effectively combat human trafficking, by making sure that people understand the crime, recognize its indicators, and know how to seek help and report tips.

### *Federal Outreach*

DHS, along with the Departments of Justice and Labor, partnered to create an advanced human trafficking training course that brings together agents and prosecutors to work on investigating and prosecuting these crimes. This interactive course focuses on complex issues of human trafficking: search warrants, witness interviewing techniques, immigration relief, evidence gathering, and discovery issues.

### *International Outreach*

We also took new steps to expand our international law enforcement engagement. On October 8, 2012, Secretary Napolitano signed an agreement with INTERPOL Secretary General Ron Noble to allow INTERPOL to place its logo on Blue Campaign materials and distribute them to all 190 member countries. DHS and INTERPOL will work together to share training and awareness materials and best practices, strengthen support for victims, increase regional partnerships, and enhance cooperation on combating human trafficking.

The Blue Campaign also utilizes the expertise and feedback from its community stakeholders and partners to shape the focus of the campaign's efforts. The Blue Campaign meets bi-annually with federal, state, local, tribal, non-governmental and community organizations, emergency management and medical professionals and private sector partners to receive feedback and guide future initiatives.

## *Awareness Products*

Many stakeholders emphasized that misconceptions about the nature of trafficking exist widely. A common misconception about human trafficking is that it only occurs outside the United States, or if it does occur domestically the victims are all noncitizens. In order to educate the public that human trafficking exists in every country, including the United States, the Blue Campaign developed a series of posters that depict different forms of human trafficking and produced a Public Service Announcement (PSA) titled, “Out of the Shadows.” These posters and PSA emphasize that victims can be many types of people, such as young children, women, men, U.S. citizens, new immigrants, and that they come from all socioeconomic groups.

To address the lack of general awareness and training available for non-law enforcement communities and individuals, the Blue Campaign collaborated with the Department of State and other federal agencies to create a 15-minute general awareness training to educate the public on the indicators of human trafficking and how to report it. DHS also developed cards, posters, and pamphlets that list the indicators of human trafficking and provide a hotline number to those who need help or want to report a suspected trafficking case. These materials are available in 17 languages to meet the language access needs identified by stakeholders and victim assistance information.

The stakeholders also identified the need for more specific information tailored for their communities that listed the tools and resources applicable to their role in fighting human trafficking. The Blue Campaign developed handout materials with tailored messages for NGOs, faith-based organizations, law enforcement, judges and lawyers, first responders, and healthcare professionals to educate about victim identification and crime reporting, the case investigation process, and available resources for victim support.

We also recognize that first responders and health care professionals are in a unique position to identify victims. We produced an informational video to help first responders – including firefighters and emergency medical technicians – identify possible victims of human trafficking, and created indicator cards and posters geared to those professionals. We continue to conduct briefings and webinars at the request of local and national medical first responder groups and associations.

## **Partnerships**

Over the past three years, the Blue Campaign developed a variety of trainings and materials, and through our partnerships we have been able to expand them to new audiences and support the efforts of our government and private sector partners.

Most recently, on September 17, 2013, the Blue Campaign announced a partnership with Western Union. Western Union agents are in a unique position to recognize human trafficking and other illicit activity of criminal organizations and businesses that utilize alternative financing

mechanisms to move and store money. Through this alliance, Western Union will provide the Blue Campaign's multilingual training and awareness materials to select Agent locations in the Southwest border region of the United States and certain other high risk locations. These materials highlight the signs of human trafficking and how to accurately report them. Participating agents will also receive additional training from Western Union on how to detect a potential human trafficking victim and how to involve law enforcement.

Engaging with all levels of government is a priority for the Blue Campaign. The Blue Campaign is pursuing partnerships with national associations representing state, local, tribal and territorial elected and appointed officials. In July 2013, DHS entered into a partnership agreement with the National Association of Counties (NACo) to promote awareness of human trafficking through the Blue Campaign. NACo is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States and provides essential services to the nation's 3,069 counties. Through this partnership, DHS will deliver webinar training, share resources to bring awareness about human trafficking and co-brand public awareness materials with both Blue Campaign and NACo logos.

We partnered with the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to enhance awareness and victim identification to the transportation industry. DOT adapted the Blue Campaign's awareness training to their workforce and in 2012, nearly all 55,000 of its employees have taken the course.

In 2012, DHS, DOT, and Amtrak entered a partnership to train all 20,000 Amtrak employees and Amtrak Police Department officers to identify and recognize indicators of human trafficking, as well as how to report suspected cases of human trafficking. We also work with the airline industry to think strategically about how it can assist in victim identification. CBP, together with DOT launched the Blue Lightning Initiative, a training program to educate airline employees how to identify human trafficking in airports or during flights and how to notify law enforcement. Since the Blue Lightning Initiative rollout, five airlines have committed to use the Blue Lightning Initiative: Delta, JetBlue, Allegiant, Silver Airways and North American.

The initial partnership with DOT led to further collaborations and joint partnerships with transportation industries. DHS and DOT provided the training to approximately 6,000 state and local law enforcement, including investigators at the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, on the best ways to detect human trafficking on trucks and buses, and these trainings will continue.

These partnerships and outreach are leading directly to more tips, more investigations and improved services for victims, and will help us achieve our ultimate goal of supporting successful prosecutions and deterrence.

## **Investigations and Victim Support**

In fiscal year 2012, ICE Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Tip Line (1-866-347-2423) received more human trafficking tips than ever before, receiving 588 tips—up from 384 in FY 2011 and 231 in FY 2010.

We investigate hundreds of human trafficking cases each year and work with the Department of Justice to ensure cases are successfully prosecuted. In FY 2012, ICE HSI investigated more cases with a nexus to human trafficking than ever before, resulting in 894 initiated cases, 381 convictions, and seized assets of more than \$1,000,000. We take a victim-centered approach in our investigations and have Victim Assistance Specialists across the ICE offices all over the United States. In recognition of the needs and unique challenges of interviewing trafficked minors and other child and special needs victims, DHS expanded its Forensic Interviewing Program to five full-time Forensic Interview Specialists.

We have observed an increase in the correlation between human trafficking and gang activity. We know that some gang members work directly with non-gang trafficking organizations. For example, gang members provide “security” enforcements at certain brothels.

Gangs have now added human trafficking to their existing crimes of drugs and firearm trafficking. Gangs recruit young girls and compel them to commit acts of commercial sex. This has occurred right here in Washington, D.C. ICE in collaboration with the Northern Virginia Human Trafficking Task Force and our federal partners recently investigated and successfully prosecuted cases where MS-13 gang members in Washington, DC, Prince George’s County, MD, and Alexandria, VA, recruited girls as young as 12 near schools, on the street, at house parties, and through social media into sex trafficking.

These joint efforts resulted in a life sentence of a MS-13 gang member that sex trafficked a 12 year old runaway whom he met at a party in Prince George’s County, Maryland. The 12 year old runaway asked for his help in finding a place to stay, and the very next day he was selling her for sex acts in Washington, D.C. and surrounding counties. For three months the MS-13 member sexually exploited the victim for money every day of the week. The trafficker also admitted to having sex with the victim and allowed MS-13 gang members to have sex with her free of charge.

DHS also provides immigration relief to eligible foreign trafficking victims, a critical component to ensuring victim participation for the successful investigation and prosecution of human trafficking cases. There are three forms of immigration relief available for victims of human trafficking – Continued Presence, T visas, and U visas. DHS has streamlined its training about immigration relief for victims to increase awareness among law enforcement agencies. These short- and long-term relief options assist law enforcement in stabilizing victims so that the victim can begin to recover and rebuild his or her life.

We are proud of what DHS has accomplished, but there is much to do still. We are working more every day to expand our partnerships, and we interact regularly with our stakeholders for new ideas and new innovative ways to combat this crime.

In closing, we will continue to work hard to develop our initiatives to meet the needs of victims, law enforcement, and service providers. We are committed to providing quality information, trainings and products that give communities the information they need to fight human trafficking.

We appreciate the opportunity to represent the Blue Campaign and DHS before the Committee, and we would be pleased to answer any questions you may have at this time.

Thank you.