



Howard County Task Force on Human Trafficking

C. Vernon Gray
Chair
Office of Human Rights

Dario Broccolino
State's Attorney
HC State's Attorney's Office

Martin Brooks
Associate Pastor
Bethany Methodist Church

Karen Butler
Director
HC Department of Social Services

James Fitzgerald
Sheriff
HC Maryland

Renee A. Foose
Superintendent of Schools
HCPSS

Steve Hess
**US Attorney's Office District
of Maryland**
Governor's Task Force on Human
Trafficking

Andrea Ingram
Executive Director
Grassroots Crisis Intervention
Center

William McMahon
Chief
HC Police Department

Lois Mikkla
Director
HC Department of Citizen
Services

Maura Rossman, M.D.
Health Officer
HC Health Department

Minutes (draft)

March 5, 2014

10:30 a.m.

C. Vernon Gray Conference Room

Members Present: C. Vernon Gray; Steven Hess, U.S. Attorney's Office; Dario Broccolino, Office of the State's Attorney; Jennifer Ritter, Office of the State's Attorney; Capt. Ellsworth Jones, Howard County Department of Police; Lt. Glenn Case, Howard County Department of Police; Restia Whitaker, Howard County Public School System; Patty Daley, Howard County Public School System; James Fitzgerald, Howard County Sheriff; Mike Demidenko, Howard County Department of Social Services; Keri Hyde, Howard County Department of Citizen Services; Nicholas Weikel, HoCo AGAST; Sara Cochran, HoCo AGAST; Suellen Seigel, Howard County Commission for Women; Sharon Hadsell, Howard County General Hospital; Colleen Nester, Howard County Health Department; Major Merritt Bender, Howard County Department of Police

Staff Present: Mary Toth, Office of Human Rights; Meredith Beach, Howard County County Council

The Chair opened the meeting at 10:30 a.m. in the C. Vernon Gray Conference Room.

Council Member Courtney Watson made welcoming comments. The Chair made opening comments.

Steven J. Hess, Law Enforcement Coordinator, U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Maryland provided an overview of the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force and efforts of U.S. Attorney's Office:

- Current law enforcement efforts focuses on victim centered response;
- Majority of the victims are domestic, not immigrants;
- Traffickers obtain victims through force, fraud or coercion;
 - Provided example of traveling brothels that are gang related where the gang rents houses for a week and works out of the house;
- Task force is working with pupil services in the schools to help create and provide presentations regarding threat of trafficking;
- Labor trafficking is mostly domestic service and agricultural labor;
- Focus of the task force and law enforcement efforts has been on commercial sex;

- FBI in coordination with State Police situations involving children under 18;
- Homeland Security investigates all trafficking;
- State currently has a system for coordinating services for victims;
 - Difficult to find beds for victims;
 - When the victim is under 18, it is difficult to find foster care for victims;
 - There have been instances where emergency nurses have reported suspicious activity of patients. Some of these situations have resulted in helping victims and charging traffickers. Training of nurses may help in the identification of victims. They have worked with Emergency Room Nurses Association.
- When an individual under the age of 18 has run away it is estimated that there is a 90% chance of the runaway being trafficked;
- Department of Juvenile Services is working on training employees for screening and preventing youth from becoming victims.

Major Bender with the Howard County Department of Police described efforts of County State Delegation amending the State law to allow the County to have a separate license for massage parlors. Generally, the type of trafficking that is seen in Howard County is sex trafficking. Capt. Ellsworth Jones said that the departments' current staff consists of one person assigned to trafficking cases.

Dario Broccolino, Howard County State's Attorney, and Jennifer Ritter, Senior Assistant State's Attorney, described how his office works with victims of trafficking and prosecuting the cases against the traffickers. There have been two successful prosecutions in the County. They estimate that there are 20-30 postings per day on "Backpage", a website for soliciting sex. Kim Basko in the Office of the State's Attorney works with the victims. All expenses for the victim are paid through the State budget through the fund used to collect court costs.

At the conclusion of the presentations, the next meeting was set for April 5, 2014 at 10:30 a.m. in the C. Vernon Gray Conference Room.

The meeting adjourned at 12:08 p.m.