

## **HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

WHEREAS human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery in which victims are subjected to force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of commercial sex, debt bondage, or involuntary labor; and

WHEREAS, human trafficking may occur in the entertainment industry, restaurants, nail salons, massage parlors, construction, landscaping, domestic services and childcare; and

WHEREAS, victims of trafficking are often exposed to harsh and extreme physical conditions including excessive work without proper protection and equipment or the use of force by their traffickers, and

WHEREAS victims of human trafficking can be anyone regardless of race, color, national origin, disability, religion age, gender, or sexual orientation; and

WHEREAS, victims can be U.S. citizens, Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs) or foreign nationals, and they can be found in urban, suburban, and rural areas; and

WHEREAS, in 2021 the International Labor Organization released a report in partnership with Walk Free Foundation estimating 27.6 million people at any given time who are in forced labor; and

WHEREAS, in 2020 the United States had 8,839 human trafficking cases reported with California consistently being the highest, where 1,339 cases were reported, followed by 987 in Texas, 738 in Florida and 414 cases in New York; and

WHEREAS a study of the National Institute found that 71% of those experiencing forced labor entered the country on lawful H2-A and H2-B visas; and

WHEREAS, the majority of construction workers who have H-2 B visas are undocumented men from Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala who are working in roofing, carpentry, welding, electrical work and masonry for small business contractors on both large commercial construction and private homes; and

WHEREAS, the International Labor Organization in 2021 estimates that 160 million children between the ages of 5 and 17 years old are engaged in child labor, of which 79 million were in hazardous labor; and

WHEREAS, many domestic victims of sex trafficking are runaways or homeless youth who have come from backgrounds of poverty, sexual abuse and physical abuse or addictions; and

WHEREAS, domestic servitude is work that is done in a private home where victims are isolated and not free to leave or take a day off. They are often abused, underpaid and their employer often controls, their housing, food and transportation; and

WHEREAS, both victims of sex and labor trafficking feel if they escape servitude and initiate an investigation against their trafficker the trafficker will harm the victim and their families; and

WHEREAS, human trafficking and forced labor has led to an estimated \$150 billion in profits annually making it one of the world's profitable crimes; and

WHEREAS, the Covid 19 pandemic has made it worse by desperate workers accepting risky job offers to survive and end up trapped in exploitative situations; and

WHEREAS, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act provides protection for trafficking victims in the United States by making foreign victims eligible for federally funded administered health benefits and other federally funded services regardless of their immigration status, including civil remedies for victims of trafficking to file law suits in federal district court. The combating of Human Trafficking efforts requires education, action in the workplace and union visibilities in communities.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that OPEIU will educate workers on their workplace rights as it takes away power from employers or traffickers who are trying to take advantage. Employees who know their rights and have OPEIU to support them are able to demand better wages, better conditions and better benefits; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that OPEIU will educate Local Union leaders on how to shift the power back to workers. Through collective action workers can achieve better working conditions, higher pay and create a balance of power between workers and employers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that OPEIU will support reforms to lower the cost of higher education to make the accessibility of a college education a reality for workers. This will serve as a deterrent for employers trafficking or exploiting workers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that OPEIU will support culturally relevant instruction and curriculums that educate students on others experiences and promote a sense of safety, belonging, and inclusivity; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that OPEIU will support the H.R. 443 - Enhancing Detection of Human Trafficking Act, introduced on 1/20/23, "To direct the Secretary of Labor to train certain employees of Department of Labor how to effectively detect and assist law enforcement in preventing human trafficking during the course of their official duties, and for other purposes."

RESOLUTION ADOPTED JUNE 2023

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