## STAFF REPORT

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| **Agenda Item:** | 8 | **Name:** | Erica Newman |
| **Proposed No**.: | 2021-0349 | **Date:** | November 2, 2021 |

**SUBJECT**

Proposed Motion 2021-0349 would request the executive to support efforts to combat human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children through the Washington State Public Awareness Campaign to Prevent Human Trafficking.

**SUMMARY**

The Proposed Motion requests the Executive to support efforts to combat human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children by raising awareness of human trafficking, in collaboration with businesses, organizations and all levels of government.

The public awareness campaign should include, but not be limited to, posting anti-human-trafficking public awareness materials in key transit corridors, the interior and exterior of buses, transit centers and county-managed buildings and locations where public awareness of human trafficking could have an impact. The campaign should begin no later than January 15, 2022 and extend through at least December 31, 2022.

**BACKGROUND**

**Human Trafficking -** Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery that include children who are involved in the commercial sex trade, individuals that are age eighteen or over who are coerced or deceived into commercial sex acts, and anyone forced into different forms of "labor or services," such as domestic workers held in a home, or farm workers forced to provide labor against their will. Human traffickers lure and ensnare individuals into labor trafficking and sex trafficking situations by using methods of control such as force, fraud or coercion. In addition to federal anti-human trafficking laws, in 2003, Washington State was the first state to criminalize human trafficking and has some of the strongest anti-human trafficking laws among the 50 states. [[1]](#footnote-1)

According to the United States Department of Justice, human trafficking is one of the fastest growing criminal industries in the world, with children accounting for half of the victims. Human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children ("CSEC") are serious crime problems on a worldwide basis, in Washington State, and in King County. Various data sources show that between three hundred and five hundred children will be bought and sold in King County this year.[[2]](#footnote-2) The average age of entry into commercial sexual exploitation in the United States is thirteen years old, and children as young as eleven years old have been commercially sexually exploited in King County.

Washington State has been described as a focal point for the recruitment, transportation and sale of people for labor, due in part to its abundance of ports, proximity to an international border, vast rural areas and dependency on agricultural workers.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Stop Human Trafficking Campaign-** In 2018, King County worked with private companies and other local agencies, including the Port of Seattle and the city of Seattle, as well as airline companies, to launch a Stop Human Trafficking campaign, which helped to:

* Raise public awareness about the nature of human trafficking
* Identify how and where human trafficking occurs within King County
* How to prevent and stop human trafficking
* How to help identify victims, survivors, and ways to promote access to services to decrease the human trafficking demand through awareness

**The National Human Trafficking Resource Center -** The National Human Trafficking Resource Center ("NHTRC") is a national, toll-free hotline for the human trafficking field in the United States. The NHTRC is a program of Polaris Project, a non-profit, non-governmental organization working exclusively on the issue of human trafficking The NHTRC operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year. The NHTRC works to improve the national response to protect victims of human trafficking in the U.S. by providing callers with a range of comprehensive services, including crisis intervention, urgent and non-urgent referrals, tip reporting, and comprehensive anti-trafficking resources and technical assistance for the anti-trafficking field and those who wish to get involved. The NHTRC is able to connect community members with additional tools to raise awareness and combat human trafficking in their local areas, as well as guide service providers and law enforcement personnel in their work with potential trafficking victims. To perform these functions, the NHTRC maintains a national database of organizations and individuals working in the anti-trafficking field, as well as a library of available anti-trafficking resources and materials.

Washington state had the eighth-highest call volume to the National Human Trafficking Hotline in 2019, an increase from being the thirteenth-highest state in 2018.[[4]](#footnote-4)

**ANALYSIS**

Proposed Motion 2021-0349 requests the Executive to support the efforts of the Washington State Public Awareness Campaign to Prevent Human Trafficking. The public awareness campaign includes, but not limited to, the posting of anti-human-trafficking public awareness materials in key transit corridors, the interior and exterior of buses, transit centers, county-managed buildings, and other locations where raising public awareness of human trafficking could have an impact. The campaign should begin no later than January 15, 2022 and extend through at least December 31, 2022.

The proposed motion would also declare that the Council intends to continue King County's effort to raise awareness and combat human trafficking, in collaboration with businesses, organizations and all levels of government, including the statewide public awareness campaign, which will commence by January 2022.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Proposed Motion 2021-0349
1. Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000; Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act 2003, 2005, 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.portseattle.org/blog/four-facts-about-human-trafficking-washington [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.naco.org/articles/labor-trafficking-%E2%80%98invisible%E2%80%99-epidemic [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. https://www.portseattle.org/news/human-trafficking-hotline-calls-washington-state-increased-2019

 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)