

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, human trafficking is a crime that preys on the vulnerable, in which victims are forced to work in various forms of labor exploitation including, but not limited to, commercial sex acts and other services that are induced through force, fraud, and coercion; and

WHEREAS, according to the International Labour Organization, human trafficking is a \$150 billion criminal industry that denies freedom to 40.3 million people around the world. One in four victims are children. Women and girls account for “99 percent of victims in the commercial sex industry and 58 percent in other sectors;” and

WHEREAS, sex traffickers target children in foster care and group homes because they are more vulnerable to exploitation due to the trauma they have experienced and the lack of a permanent, stable home; and

WHEREAS, no one is immune from trafficking, as it crosses all racial, social, and economic levels, and commercial sexual exploitation of children is the most common form of human trafficking in America; and

WHEREAS, in 2017, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children estimated that 1 out of 7 endangered runaways that were reported to them were likely child sex trafficking victims, 88 percent of whom were in the care of social services or foster care when they ran away; and

WHEREAS, since 2007, Polaris, a leader in the fight to eradicate modern slavery, has operated the National Human Trafficking Hotline; and since the hotline has been in existence, it has received 186,234 calls, which have resulted in 51,919 cases of alleged human trafficking being opened; and

WHEREAS, the National Human Trafficking Hotline further reports that since 2007, there have been a total of 5,239 contacts received by the hotline concerning alleged human trafficking in Virginia, which resulted in 1,235 cases being opened; and

WHEREAS, in 2018, Virginia ranked 15th in the United States for the most reported cases of human trafficking, with the state reporting 198 cases with 38 involving minors and 129 involving female victims, according to the National Human Trafficking Hotline; and

WHEREAS, upon the motion of the Virginia State Crime Commission on January 5, 2021 supports the full recommendation of the creation of a statute which allows victims to vacate prostitution and maintaining bawdy place convictions and petitions courts for expungement of charges of victims of sex trafficking related to those exploitations; and

WHEREAS, upon the motion of the Virginia State Crime Commission on January 5, 2021 supports the full recommendation dividing Virginia's prostitution statute into two separate code sections to better distinguish between prostitution and solicitation of prostitution, which will allow for more accurate data collection and allow for clearer identification of the supply and demand components of the commercial sex trafficking industry; and

WHEREAS, in 2019 Shared Hope International gave Virginia a “C” when it comes to laws protecting children from sex trafficking and providing victims justice. While there have been more resources and policy changes focused on eradicating human trafficking, more must be done; and

WHEREAS, the Alexandria Commission for Women, the Alexandria City Council, the Alexandria Gang Prevention Community Task Force, the American Association of University Women, the Alexandria United Methodist Women, and the Alexandria Human Rights Commission call on all who reside and work in the City of Alexandria to remain vigilant, report any form of human trafficking, and support interventions and services that protect and empower survivors of such abuse and exploitation; and

WHEREAS, National Human Trafficking Awareness Day is observed annually on January 11th.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JUSTIN M. WILSON, Mayor of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, and on behalf of the Alexandria City Council, do hereby proclaim and recognize the observance of January 11, 2021 as:

“HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS DAY”

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City of Alexandria to be affixed this 12th day of January, 2021.

MAYOR JUSTIN M. WILSON
On behalf of the City Council
of Alexandria, Virginia

ATTEST:

Gloria A. Sitton, CMC City Clerk

