

Dr. Lawrence S. Feldman, Chair

**SUBJECT: ENDORSEMENT OF JANUARY AS NATIONAL SLAVERY AND
HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION MONTH IN MIAMI-DADE
COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**COMMITTEE: INNOVATION, GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS, AND
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC
BLUEPRINT: INFORMED, ENGAGED, AND EMPOWERED STAKEHOLDERS**

Human trafficking involves the commercial exchange and exploitation of humans, involuntary labor, servitude, and debt bondage. Human trafficking is a growing worldwide problem rising to the third largest criminal activity in the world, with Florida ranking as the third in the nation in incidences of human trafficking.

January is national Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month. As shared by President Obama, "This month, we rededicate ourselves to stopping one of the greatest human rights abuses of our time. Around the world, millions of men, women, and children are bought, sold, beaten, and abused, locked in compelled service and hidden in darkness. As Americans, we have long rejected such cruelty. We have recognized it as a debasement of our common humanity and an affront to the principles we cherish. And for more than a century, we have made it a national mission to bring slavery and human trafficking to an end."

The implementation of Florida's Safe Harbor Act in 2012 has also helped to ensure the safety of child victims who have been trafficked for sex. The Safe Harbor Act allows children who have been rescued from prostitution the ability to receive assistance from child welfare professionals, instead of being placed in juvenile delinquency. This allows the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Department of Juvenile Justice, law enforcement and our local partners across the state to treat and help the victims of this abuse. In 2016, House Bill 7141 expanded the provisions of the Florida Safe Harbor Act by requiring the DCF to develop or adopt a screening instrument for the identification of sexually exploited children, service planning and placement. In addition, staff such as child protective investigators and case managers are required to have specialized training prior to working with minors that have been sexually exploited and foster homes or group homes desiring to care for sexually exploited children must meet minimum standards. Upon certification, these licensed settings are then identified as Safe Foster Homes or Safe Houses to serve as a placement option for sexually exploited children and young adults.

In local efforts, The School Board of Miami-Dade County passed Agenda Item H-20 in May 2012 endorsing a Human Trafficking Awareness Campaign. The District's commitment to bringing an end to human trafficking includes awareness training aimed at identifying at-risk behaviors and providing appropriate interventions in school communities throughout the county.

With the collaboration of community stakeholders and experts, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) developed strategies to promote awareness, share both on-line and local resources in the community, and analyze gaps in the areas of prevention and intervention. The information learned was then provided to administrators by way of a School Principal Briefing, which included the dissemination of the Human Trafficking Prevention Poster developed by the Students Services division of M-DCPS, along with comprehensive resource pages and fact sheets. Content is now available to all school personnel via the M-DCPS website.

The District's Human Trafficking Campaign, Florida's Safe Harbor Act, and the President's proclamation are efforts that shed light on the growing problem of human trafficking and its impact and consequences to our youth. This item seeks to further commend local, state, and national efforts to increase awareness of human trafficking by designating January as National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month throughout Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY CHAIR
DR. LAWRENCE S. FELDMAN:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, endorse January 2017 as National Slavery and Human Trafficking Awareness Month throughout Miami-Dade County Public Schools.