

Dr. Lawrence S. Feldman, Board Member

**SUBJECT: ENDORSEMENT OF JANUARY AS HUMAN TRAFFICKING
 AWARENESS MONTH**

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

LINK TO STRATEGIC

BLUEPRINT: SAFE, HEALTHY AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Human Trafficking is defined by the United Nations as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons by improper means (such as force, abduction, fraud, or coercion) for an improper purpose including forced labor or sexual exploitation. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) believes it to be the third largest criminal activity in the world, affecting U.S. citizens and foreigners alike. It is difficult to assess the full scope of the issue as many cases go undetected, but estimates indicate that there are between 20 and 40 million people in modern day slavery. Locally, efforts to address the issue have been made by Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), inter-agency task forces, government agencies, and community-based organizations. Miami-Dade State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle's Office has also led efforts to bring awareness to the issue, advocate for victims, and bring criminals involved in this heinous crime to justice. According to State Attorney Fernandez Rundle's Office, Florida statistics indicate the state ranks third in the nation for human trafficking and half of the sex victims in the U.S. are 17 years old or younger. In Miami-Dade approximately 40% of our total victims are minors and 96% of those minors are female. The School Board of Miami-Dade County Public Schools and M-DCPS's Division of Student Services (DSS) and Police Department (M-DSPD) have initiated noteworthy efforts to educate and bring awareness to the school community, assist victims, and combat the efforts of human trafficking organizers.

In May 2012, the Board approved agenda item *H20 - School Board Endorsement of a Miami-Dade County Public Schools Human Trafficking Awareness Campaign*, aimed at educating students, administrators, teachers, counselors and school site personnel on the issues of human trafficking. As a result, M-DCPS became one of the first school districts to address the issue in a strategic and dedicated manner, receiving recognition from organizations like the Texas Young Lawyers Association for this initiative. The resulting public awareness campaign featured a poster distributed to school sites, the distribution of a resource page with both local community and on-line resources, related administrative briefings, and collaboration with various internal and external stakeholders, such as the State Attorney's Office, for the development and implementation of a community-wide campaign. In 2019, the Board reconfirmed their dedication

to safeguarding students from human trafficking through the approval of agenda item *H12 - Human Trafficking Education* proffered by School Board Member Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall. Dr. Bendross-Mindingall's item supported the addition of human trafficking education to our health curriculum and received the support of the Board and community alike. School Board Member Dr. Martin Karp has also lent his voice to advancing this important issue, participating in a Children's Trust and Women's Fund of Miami-Dade community-wide awareness campaign which featured his likeness and message to the community.

In order to support the safety and wellness of our students, the Division of Student Services (DSS) also continues to make human trafficking awareness and prevention a priority. Recently, they collaborated with Toyota of North Miami to sponsor a Human Trafficking Prevention Poster Contest. This contest engaged students at every grade level in a campaign to increase awareness of human trafficking. The culmination of this contest was a Human Trafficking Poster Art Walk at New World School of the Arts, where the community was invited to view the students' art work and unite in their commitment to eliminate human trafficking from our community. In order to ensure that teachers and school staff are educated about the dangers associated with human trafficking, the DSS provided all secondary schools with the video, "What is Human Trafficking?" produced by the Department of Homeland Security. Schools were required to show this video during a faculty meeting in the fall of 2019. Recently, the Florida State Board of Education passed rule 6A-1.094123, Child Trafficking Prevention Education. The intent of the State Board of Education is that every school in the state be a "Child Trafficking Free Zone." To this end, M-DCPS, through the Division of Academics, will provide K-12 students annually with developmentally appropriate education on child trafficking prevention and awareness. The DSS also hosted mandatory training for our District's school counselors and school psychologists during the professional development day in November 2019. This training was a collaboration with the FBI and included information about how to recognize changes in behavior and appearance which may be signs of underlying problems associated with human trafficking. The DSS has also forged collaborative relationships with external partners, like Kristi House, a trusted community resource for survivors of sexual abuse and exploitation, who has provided them with resources and support their training efforts. United Way also serves as a partner, offering a Human Trafficking Prevention Symposium for educators and impact partners. This symposium, which will take place in late winter, will include awareness, prevention, and intervention resources.

The M-DPSD General Investigations Unit, under the leadership of Chief Edwin Lopez, continues to take proactive steps to assure human trafficking remains a priority issue. M-DSPD detectives are presently assigned as the liaison between the agency and local entities to assist and provide any and all information related to the growing trend of crime in human trafficking. The mission of the Human Trafficking Task Force is to identify and rescue victims, create a coordinated law enforcement system to investigate and prosecute these crimes, and to deliver social, legal and immigration services to human trafficking victims in M-DCPS. The Task Force serves as a mechanism for communication and strategic collaboration between law enforcement agencies and service providers; coordinates community and school resources; promotes community and student awareness of human trafficking; and trains intermediary communities and school personnel on human trafficking indicators and responses. In addition, M-DSPD will partner with local municipalities in a joint effort to identify and prevent suspected cases of human trafficking during Super Bowl LIV. Human trafficking occurs throughout the year, however, human traffickers make use of this time and related event platforms to sexually exploit victims and generate considerable profit. Further, there will be various staging sites and continuous monitoring of schools sites via M-DSPD Police Command Center during the weeks leading up to Super Bowl LIV events.

This item has been reviewed and approved by the School Board Attorney's office as to form and legal sufficiency.

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

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, endorse January 2020 as National Slavery and Human Trafficking Awareness Month in Miami-Dade County Public Schools and support the related efforts of the Division of Student Services and Police Department.