

Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, Board Member

SUBJECT: HUMAN TRAFFICKING EDUCATION

COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, INNOVATIONS, EVALUATION & TECHNOLOGY

LINK TO STRATEGIC

BLUEPRINT: RELEVANT, RIGOROUS AND INNOVATIVE ACADEMICS

Human trafficking is a major problem in our community and nation today. Florida ranks third in the nation in human trafficking. This problem has infiltrated the walls and halls of our schools, which are often places for the recruitment of Human trafficking victims.

The 19th Annual No More Broken Hearts Domestic Violence Forum/Town Hall was held last month at the Georgia Jones Ayers Middle School. This annual event, founded by Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, brings together a cross-section of the community to discuss domestic violence and human trafficking. The half day program provided Information and resources, and consisted of workshop sessions from various perspectives regarding this danger in our homes, schools and community.

We also thank Dr. Lawrence Feldman for his leadership in this area as it relates to human trafficking, and look forward to collaborating as we move forward to end this scourge in our schools and community.

One of the goals of No More Broken Hearts is to discuss and develop action items and concrete solutions that can be translated into actionable items to address this problem. One of the recommendations from this year's event is the focus on this policy item. As such, there is currently a bill in Florida Legislature that will require human trafficking education and awareness in schools. House Bill 259 among other things, "Revises required health education in public schools to include human trafficking; authorizes student to opt out of specified portion of health education; requires Department of Legal Affairs to develop and operate hotline to receive reports of potential human trafficking activity and report specified reports to law enforcement for certain purposes.

According to the Florida Department of Education, human trafficking, under both federal and Florida law, is defined as the transporting, soliciting, recruiting, harboring, providing or obtaining of another person for transport; for the purposes of forced labor, domestic servitude or sexual exploitation using force, fraud and/or coercion. Human trafficking is modern slavery.

There are approximately 30 million people enslaved throughout the world with 2.5 million located right here in the United States.

- Many of these victims are lured with false promises of financial or emotional security; instead, they are forced or coerced into commercial sex (prostitution), domestic servitude or other types of forced labor.
- Any minor under the age of 18 who is induced to perform a commercial sex act is a victim of human trafficking according to U.S. law, regardless of whether there is force, fraud or coercion. Increasingly, criminal organizations, such as gangs, are luring children from local schools into commercial sexual exploitation or trafficking.
- According to the U.S. Department of Justice, every two minutes a child is trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation in the United States.

Most school-aged Florida children spend five days a week, six to eight hours a day, in schools. As a result, schools are a potential environment for a variety of prevention and intervention activities for the children. School settings provide educators and school personnel with a unique opportunity to support the health and development of students. Ensuring a safe and supportive environment for students is the responsibility of all school personnel.

House Bill 259 adds a human trafficking component to the health curriculum in public schools. The bill states in relevant part, “the human trafficking education portion of the health curriculum must include, but is not limited to, information on the warning signs of human trafficking, terms used by traffickers, red flags that would indicate a trafficker’s malicious intent toward a student, websites that are popular with traffickers, and details on how a student may get help. A student may elect to opt out of the instruction of the human trafficking portion of the health education by providing the school with a written note from his or her parent.”

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

ACTION PROPOSED BY DR. DOROTHY BENDROSS-MINDINGALL:

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent to:

- 1) to include this item as a priority for the School Board’s 2019 Legislative agenda; and
- 2) explore the feasibility of adding Human Trafficking Education to school district’s health curriculum, and report back to the Board by the June 19, 2019 School Board meeting.