

## News Release

### **‘Survivor to Thriver’ pilot program to support survivors of human trafficking beyond physiological needs**

*New program to help survivors rebuild their lives, thrive within their community*

**August 10, 2022, OAKLAND COUNTY, MI.** – The Board of Commissioners recently adopted a resolution to establish a new program to provide survivors of human trafficking with items and experiences for personal and/or professional development. The Survivor to Thriver pilot program was established on August 4 during the full Board meeting, and it will be administered by Vista Maria/Michigan Abolitionist Project (MAP). The program was created based on a recommendation by the Oakland County Human Trafficking Task Force (OCHTTF), which is made up of members from county agencies and community organizations.

“Almost all of these survivors, and in some cases their children, have never had the means to enroll in professional trainings or create happy memories like visiting the zoo,” Commissioner **Janet Jackson** (D-Southfield), chair of the OCHTTF, said. “This new program will help fill gaps in existing resources so opportunities to create a fuller and positive life are available to those who have experienced human trafficking.”

The Board authorized up to \$10,900 to be used for administration of the program, including reviewing applications and connecting agencies with requests made by survivors. Vista Maria/MAP will raise funds from private sponsorships or donations for the pilot program.

“Everyone deserves a chance to start a new career, find their passions or even just make good memories with a family member,” Commissioner **Michael Spisz** (R-Oxford), minority vice chairperson of the OCHTTF, said. “I’m happy that we’re going to be able to bring some opportunities to those who really need help moving forward with their lives.”

Allison Mercer, a victim advocate case worker for Common Ground and member of the OCHTTF, brought the program idea to the task force in 2021. She explained the group was integral in determining how the program could be launched in Oakland County, especially as there are not existing programs in

place to help survivors with their diverse needs. Instead of assisting survivors with rebuilding their lives holistically, most state and federal funding is for emergency needs to teach survivors “just to survive.”

“I’m grateful the county is taking such a big step to make a difference in this field,” Mercer said. “This program will be broad in service because everyone has different interests. Survivor is just one title they may hold, some are also parents, siblings, community members, friends, all with passions and interests, and now we can help them explore the areas that will allow them to thrive.”

For more information about the Oakland County Human Trafficking Task Force, visit <http://www.oakgov.com/boc/Programs/Pages/taskforce.aspx>.

For more information about the Board of Commissioners, please visit [www.oakgov.com/boc](http://www.oakgov.com/boc) or call 248-858-0100.

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