

## News Release

### County's human trafficking task force hosts event to share information with statewide groups

**May 12, 2021, OAKLAND COUNTY, MI.** – Yesterday afternoon, the Oakland County Human Trafficking Taskforce (OCHTTF) along with the Michigan Abolitionist Project (MAP), hosted a special event to help connect local agencies with statewide groups in human trafficking prevention efforts. The virtual session, titled "Improving Our Collective Response to Human Trafficking: Fostering Task Forces for Governmental Agencies and Municipalities," featured panel discussions and networking opportunities to help share information and build relationships.

"The Oakland County Human Trafficking Taskforce, founded in 2015, is an established voice enhancing awareness and prevention of human trafficking," Commissioner **Janet Jackson** (D-Southfield), who chairs the taskforce, said. "Our goal for this session was to increase collaboration and assist other governmental entities establish additional task forces to collectively address this issue, ultimately helping survivors."

"It's critical that we share what we know so others around the state can be successful in their fight against human trafficking," Commissioner **Eileen T. Kowall** (R-White Lake) said. "Through this event, we've been able to grow the statewide network so that we can all help each other to protect and support survivors of this public health problem."

During the event, state and countywide officials hosted panel discussions during which they took questions from attendees. Kelly Carter, Michigan Human Trafficking Commission Chair; Jay Kommareddi, Michigan Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board Chair; and Joyce Haskett, Michigan Human Trafficking Commission shared information related to how their groups influence action at the state level. Kowall and Oakland County Prosecutor Karen spoke about how their organizations work together at the county level to help connect survivors to local resources and combat local trafficking operations. Additionally, Alice Johnson from Neighborhood Legal Services shared information about her organization's diversion program, and Commissioner **Gwen Markham** (D-Novi) closed the program.

“It is impossible for any single organization to respond comprehensively to all of the elements of human trafficking,” Kathy Maitland, MAP executive director, said. “We will be most effective if our efforts are coordinated and efficient, which happens best when we share practices and collaborate. MAP was happy to support this event and will continue to work with our partners to host future events like this.”

In addition to the panel discussions, attendees had a chance to network with each other and learn more about how local communities are addressing human trafficking. Renatta Parnell, a case manager at The Alabaster Gift, explained that the organization is looking expand services beyond what they currently offer to women who are currently or who have previously been involved in sexual and labor exploitation. She wanted to attend the event for more information on the work currently being done and to learn how to broaden the organization's effectiveness.

“We’ve been largely looking to partner with organizations in surrounding counties so we can better serve the clientele we have,” Parnell said. “We feel like by joining up with organizations like MAP, we can better serve the survivors and find resources that work. Today was a good opportunity to see what’s actually happening.”

The OCHTTF was created under the authorization of the Board of Commissioners. The goal of the taskforce is to serve as the leading resource for Oakland County in the prevention of human trafficking and in the protection and rehabilitation of victims, through education, advocacy and collaboration.

For more information about the OCHTTF, please visit [www.oakgov.com/boc/Programs/Pages/taskforce.aspx](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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