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April 15, 2025

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

***Subject: National Human Trafficking Hotline (Funding Opportunity
No. HHS-2025OACF-IOAS-OTIP-ZV-0002)***

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

Your agency plays a vital role in the fight to end the growing and persistent criminal enterprise of human trafficking through the National Human Trafficking Hotline, which is funded through a grant from HHS' Administration for Children & Families. As Attorneys General, we are dedicated partners in this effort, as well. We advocate for legislative changes to support anti-trafficking efforts and victim services. We raise public awareness about trafficking. And we support and engage in law enforcement efforts to disrupt trafficking operations and hold the perpetrators accountable.

The National Human Trafficking Hotline had long been an integral part of our work, until it was discovered a few years ago that the organization awarded the grant to run the Hotline, Polaris, was no longer sharing tips from concerned citizens and distressed family members with local law enforcement. Without those tips, our law enforcement loses critical leads to dismantling trafficking operations. We also lose valuable leads to rescuing the victims of trafficking and helping them begin the road to recovery.

To be clear, we are not asking that the Hotline report calls from victims who say they do not want their call reported. But we are asking them to send us the tips they get from anyone other than the victim. We are asking for the tips from the trucker who sees suspicious behavior on the road, the flight attendant who notices something unusual in the airport, the front desk clerk who sees something that

does not make sense at their motel, or the citizen who sees the same woman being abused at the corner market week after week. Those tips matter, and reporting those tips can save lives.

The notice of funding opportunity posted on January 16, 2025, indicates that notifying law enforcement of potential cases of human trafficking is a function of the Hotline. Last year, your predecessor, in a response to a QFR posed by Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith, and in response to concerns raised by a bipartisan coalition of 36 Attorneys General, indicated that the Department of Health and Human Services was taking steps to ensure that the Hotline would return to a better working relationship with law enforcement. In fact, then-Secretary Becerra stated that the Administration for Children and Families was "incorporating additional language in the next NOFO outlining specific coordination requirements with law enforcement."

The current NOFO does, in fact, include a requirement for the awardee to develop a plan to strategically engage law enforcement and to determine how to report tips to law enforcement. We cannot stress enough the importance of ensuring that this year's awardee is committed to notifying law enforcement of tips it receives from a vigilant public. As Attorneys General, we spent years attempting to engage with Polaris in an honest dialogue about how vital those tips are to our efforts to help human trafficking victims. But in the end, we were unable to convince them of this necessity.

The grant's notice currently lists the closing date for applications as May 2, 2025. As you consider applicants, we urge you to ensure that the organization that is awarded the grant for the National Human Trafficking Hotline demonstrates its commitment to being a partner to our offices and local law enforcement with timely reports of trafficking tips. We have worked hard to teach the public the signs of trafficking and how to report it when they think they see it. But sending the public to the Hotline when they see someone in trouble is futile if the organization running it refuses to share those tips and share them in a timely manner.

We are committed to ending human trafficking and to helping its victims become survivors, recovering without shame or blame. And we offer ourselves as a resource to your team if you would like to discuss how we can partner to end human trafficking. We look forward to working with the new administrator of the Hotline and with you and your office to restore hope, dignity, and peace of mind to the victims of human trafficking.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Jennings
Delaware Attorney General



Liz Murrill
Louisiana Attorney General



Lynn Fitch
Mississippi Attorney General



Aaron D. Ford
Nevada Attorney General



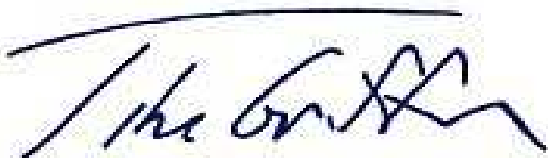
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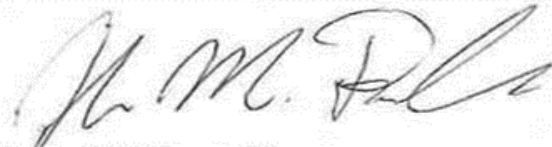
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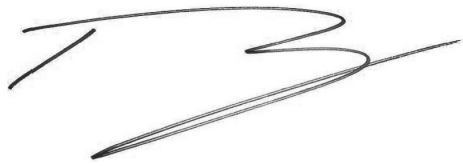
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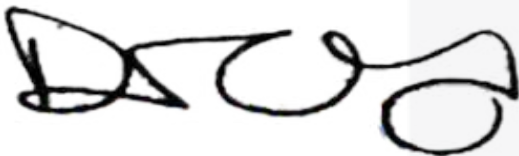
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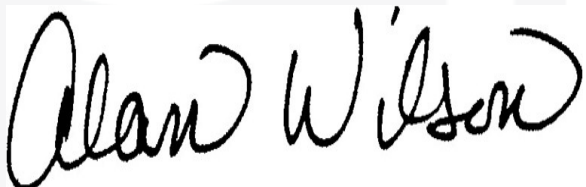
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Jonathan Skrmetti
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A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gordon C. Rhea".

Gordon C. Rhea
U.S. Virgin Islands Attorney General

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Derek Brown".

Derek Brown
Utah Attorney General

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Charity Clark
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John "JB" McCuskey
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Wisconsin Attorney General

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bridget Hill".

Bridget Hill
Wyoming Attorney General

