

Proclamation for Human Trafficking Prevention and Awareness Month

WHEREAS, human trafficking is the use of force, fraud or coercion to compel a person into commercial sex acts or labor services against their will. Exploitation of a minor for commercial sex is human trafficking, regardless of whether any form of force, fraud, or coercion was used; and

WHEREAS, one of the world's fastest growing crimes is the buying and selling of people, whose growth has been accelerated in recent years due to an increase in other social injustices such as abuse, domestic violence, racism, stigmatism, and more. Communities in rural Iowa are seeing a significant increase in the number of children victimized by labor trafficking, especially children coming to the United States from Central America: and

WHEREAS, there is a large disparity between the number of persons victimized by this horrific crime and the number of persons prosecuted as offenders, with more than 661 victims receiving services in Iowa's direct service programs in 2022, and only three individuals being convicted in Iowa's federal courts for human trafficking, and four in Iowa's state appellate courts; and

WHEREAS, even though awareness of this crime is growing, human trafficking continues to be missed and go vastly unreported; and

WHEREAS, every business, community organization, faith community, family and individual can make a difference by working to protect the vulnerable within their sphere of influence; by addressing the problem of internet sex trafficking; choosing products that are not made by forced labor; and by becoming more aware of the problem and possible solutions; and

WHEREAS, the City of Independence, joins Chains Interrupted in their dedication to providing community outreach and education, legislative advocacy, training, promotion of services to survivors of human trafficking, and collaboration with law enforcement; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Brad Bleichner, Mayor of Independence, Iowa do hereby proclaim the month of January as Human Trafficking Prevention and Awareness month and encourage all our citizens to become more informed on this growing problem, to be vigilant and report suspicious activity, and to work towards solutions to end trafficking in all its forms in our community.

Signed the 8th of January 2024.

Brad Bleichner, Mayor

For assistance with this, reach out to Chains Interrupted at (319) 364-0222. If you see something that doesn't look right, reach out to the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 888-373-7888.