

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, January is recognized as National Human Trafficking Prevention Month, an observance initiated in 2010 to uphold the inherent equality and freedom of all individuals, to foster legislation and protections for survivors, and to promote public awareness and action against human trafficking in all its forms; and

WHEREAS, despite over two decades since the passing of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, human trafficking continues to affect an estimated 27.6 million people globally, with cases reported in every U.S. state and territory;

WHEREAS, local high-profile cases of human trafficking—including the tragic murders of Susana Remerata Blackwell, her unborn child, Phoebe Dizon, and Veronica Laureta at the King County Courthouse in 1995 and the 1999 murder of Anastasia Solovieva—garnered international attention and spurred local advocates to mobilize for justice and reform; and

WHEREAS, these profound tragedies galvanized change, leading Washington to become the first state to criminalize human trafficking in 2003, setting a national precedent and inspiring a wave of anti-human trafficking initiatives and legislation; and

WHEREAS, human trafficking, defined as the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of labor or commercial sexual exploitation, now ranks as the world's second largest and rapidly growing underground economy; and

WHEREAS, trafficking presents a pervasive threat and public health risk to individuals of all backgrounds, occurring in plain sight in sectors such as hospitality, agriculture, and domestic work, with traffickers ranging from strangers to acquaintances; and

WHEREAS, trafficking disproportionately affects marginalized individuals, particularly those subjected to abuse, violence, poverty, instability, social isolation and/or discrimination, including immigrants, refugees, women, transgender individuals, people of color, youth, and members of the LGBTQ+ community; and

WHEREAS, the devastating impact of human trafficking—profound physical, sexual, and psychological harm to its victims—necessitates vigilant and comprehensive strategies for combat and support and requires concerted efforts across all sectors of society; and

WHEREAS, the City of Seattle has demonstrated its commitment to ending gender-based violence by allocating significant resources towards social services, survivor leadership, and specialized criminal justice responses to combat human trafficking; and

WHEREAS, these efforts have empowered hundreds to receive advocacy, counseling, flexible assistance, shelter, housing, and therapeutic services, thereby affirming our commitment to human rights, fair pay, safe working conditions, and freedom from exploitation; and

WHEREAS, reducing the demand for commercial sexual exploitation and holding accountable those who perpetuate these crimes are critical steps towards dismantling the trafficking networks; and

WHEREAS, City of Seattle initiatives like the Sex Buyers Intervention Program, spearheaded by the Seattle Municipal Court and the Seattle Human Services Department, represent a vital effort to diminish the demand for commercial sex by educating individuals about the realities of purchasing sex and its broader societal impacts; and

WHEREAS, the City recognizes the importance of community engagement, education, and the participation of every citizen in eradicating beliefs and practices that foster exploitation; and

WHEREAS, a successful response to human trafficking demands a coordinated, community-wide effort, valuing the perspectives and expertise of survivors, and fostering public-private partnerships for a comprehensive approach; and

WHEREAS, in our pursuit to eradicate human trafficking, Seattle aspires to be a place of opportunity, equity, and justice, where all individuals are treated with dignity, receive fair compensation, and are free from exploitation and human rights abuses;

THEREFORE, THE MAYOR OF SEATTLE PROCLAIMS JANUARY 2024 TO BE

Human Trafficking Prevention Month in Seattle

The City of Seattle calls upon all residents, community organizations, businesses, and government agencies to increase their participation and support in our collective efforts to eradicate human trafficking, making Seattle a safe and just community for all.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce A. Harrell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mayor Bruce A. Harrell
City of Seattle