

## Human Trafficking Transcript 08-19-13

### AG Coakley

Good morning. Massachusetts Attorney General Martha Coakley. I have with me today State Police Colonel Tim Alben, Superintendent Chief Daniel Linskey from the Boston Police Department, Julie Dahlstrom from Lutheran Social Services, Audrey Morrissey from My Life My Choice, and House Judiciary Chair Eugene O'Flaherty.

We are pleased to announce today the release of our report of our Human Trafficking Task Force. This report provides, we believe, a comprehensive plan for seeking to end human trafficking in the Commonwealth and addressing the important needs of survivors. We also have here in attendance, besides those folks with me here, several members of our colleagues from the inter-agency human trafficking policy task force. Nineteen altogether including additional subcommittee members, they represent the best from the worlds from victim services, from law enforcement, academia, public policy, state government. I want to thank those members of the task force who are here particularly but for all of the members of the task force and our hardworking subcommittees for bringing both their expertise and their passion to bear on the work we've done for the last eighteen months, as well as this comprehensive report, which, I'll note in a minute, is not the end of our work but frankly the beginning of it. This committee has owned these recommendations and I think their dedication to the work individually with the agencies they represent and collectively are shown in what we've been able to accomplish.

Now this report was mandated by the human trafficking law passed by the Legislature in 2011. It was a comprehensive statute, we still believe it's one of the best in the country, but we also knew, as the legislature asked us to do, is to look for what else we needed to do to make sure that statute would work. And so we have done that. We have provided a comprehensive set of findings and recommendations for Massachusetts—we believe they are among the most comprehensive in the country, and we think that it sets a new bar for how states should be approaching the fight against human trafficking.

Human trafficking is a brutal and a dehumanizing crime, and because of its nature it often goes unreported. These are victims often with no voice of their own, and often with very few voices to speak for them. Because of that many people think it just doesn't happen, or they think that it is victimless. But we know that these victims are often children who are fleeing an abusive or a neglectful home. They're teens who should be in school instead of being sexually exploited online, in the street, in hotel rooms. They're often people far from home who are brought to this country or to Massachusetts without the support of family and friends, and often brought here in very deceptive circumstances about what their life is going to be like. Unlike the sale of guns and drugs, which when sold are out of the traffickers inventory, a trafficked person may be sold over and over again for labor, for sex, or for both. So as you might imagine, it has become a very lucrative business.

My own experience with learning to see human trafficking goes back to my days when I served as chief of the child abuse unit in Middlesex County in the early 90s. I often worked with these victims.

Sadly, often young women whose first point of contact with the system was as a defendant, had been arrested, for instance, for soliciting for sex. And they got a record, they were occasionally disclosing they were victims, but not always. And at the time the system unfortunately focused on them, rather than on the buyers and the enterprise sellers or pimps who went about their business. It's why, for instance, this statute providing for the safe harbor provision and making sure we implement that for these young victims is so important.

This report examines the issue of human trafficking and makes recommendations to help identify trafficking victims, strengthen our ability to help survivors, and ultimately seek to end trafficking in our state. At the center of this report are recommendations relative to victim services. We need to develop capacity to serve survivors, and particularly in the short run, we have such a lack of services like safe houses for those who are victims of human trafficking, particularly when we bring cases, when we arrest, when we indict. We need to focus on reducing the demand, because as long as there is a market for this, they'll be those who attempt to fill that market. We need better data collection and information, we need definitions that are similar at the federal state level, and we need screening tools, and we need coordinated data collections so we can get the full picture of what this looks like. We need education and training so that we can shine a spotlight on trafficking for first responders, for healthcare, and for teachers. And also we need to definitely amplify our efforts at public awareness of this crime. Each one of these recommendations in our report will make a difference, but we also know that working together they complement each other and give us the opportunity to efficiently use resources and get the best result for the Commonwealth. And, as I mentioned earlier, we are keenly aware that this is a beginning and not an end.

So the report also identifies next steps for Massachusetts. We have prioritized five areas that we agree require the most attention. First, as I mentioned, a priority is obtaining the resources necessary to provide for safe houses for victims short term and long term. If we are not able to provide that then all of our other efforts will not amount to what we'd like to see in combating trafficking. We also know we need to do more work around the issue of labor trafficking, identifying victims, understanding that problem and addressing those who would traffic in labor victims. Better data collection, we need much more work on that, implementation, as I mentioned, of the safe harbor provision, training and education. And so this committee which has worked very hard, I am proud to say is committed to maintaining our connection and our work around these five priorities. On the issue of safe houses, right now in Massachusetts there are very few places that are available for victims of trafficking. Law enforcement and victim services are forced to scramble often on a Friday night or a Sunday morning for expensive, temporary, and ultimately inappropriate housing for the victims of this kind of crime. They've been through the worst imaginable circumstances for a long period of time, and safety and our concern for their safety short-term and long-term has to be a first priority. There's an urgent need to address that gap and we're going to focus on it.

The recommendations in this report are neither complex nor really resource intensive, and we believe that we can work to make this work in Massachusetts. But they will take will and cooperation. That's why we all unanimously support the recommendations and will continue to work to implement it, and frankly, we ask the help of everybody in Massachusetts.

Thank you. I'm now going to turn the podium over to Colonel Timothy Alben. We really appreciate that we and members of the State Police who served on the task force and work with us and work with DA's on implementing the statute has been crucial and we're delighted that he could join us today for this announcement. Thank you.

### **Colonel Tim Alben**

Good morning. I'm Timothy Alben. I'm the superintendent of the Massachusetts State Police. And I want to begin my remarks this morning by thanking Attorney General Martha Coakley for her great leadership in putting together this task force that resulted in this report that's being issued today.

No law enforcement office across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts deals with the issues of human trafficking. And the report points out that we've got work to do in terms of some of our training and identification of these issues. As law enforcement agents we are usually the first people to make contact in some of these areas and so through our liaisons with 11 district attorneys across the state, particularly in the urban areas of Massachusetts, we want to develop strong partnerships and working relationships in bringing these cases through fruitful prosecution. And so the Attorney General has made great headway in doing that, certainly with this report and our new initiatives. Those urban areas across the state tend to be where a lot of this occurs, and we encounter many of these human trafficking issues on our highways and in our metropolitan areas across the Commonwealth. So we want our troopers and our partner law enforcement agencies at the local level to be well prepared, well suited, well-educated to make those kinds of identifications and early interventions.

I want everybody to know that the Massachusetts State Police is very committed, and this begins really with my predecessor Colonel Marian McGovern who made an initial commitment to this task force some 18 months ago, so I certainly want to thank her for that. And I look forward to working with the Attorney General and members of the commission as we move forward with aggressive intervention in this area. Thank you.

### **AG Coakley**

Thank you Colonel. And next we're also delighted to have with us Daniel Linskey from Boston Police. I do want to say that Boston Police and Dan Connolly's Suffolk District Attorney's Office have been leaders in particularly promoting the idea of safe harbor that it was really more important to go after those who bought sex and organized the selling of these young women, mostly young women, but young people involved. And their involvement both in this task force and in the work they've done day in and day out has been crucial. And so Superintendent Chief Dan Linskey is here.

### **Chief Dan Linskey**

Thank you on behalf of the mayor and Commissioner Davis. I want to thank the Attorney General for her leadership on this. And I want to also thank Colonel Alben, Julie Dahlstrom, Audrey Morrissey from My Life My Choice, Chairman O'Flaherty as well as Chairwoman Clark who have shepherded this effort going forward. I would be remiss if I didn't thank Deputy Superintendent Kelly

Nee of the Boston Police Department, who's been on the forefront for our involvement on this, and she's done a yeoman's work and a phenomenal job. So thank you Kelly.

I want to recognize the hard work of the interagency human trafficking policy task force for their efforts in drafting this comprehensive report. Since the first meeting in February of 2012, this committee and subcommittee have worked tirelessly to put together this report while still working their full time jobs. These recommendations give us a road map to advance our fight against those who exploit our vulnerable citizens through human trafficking and provide us with recommendations on how to help victims in the aftermath.

Human trafficking is a widespread problem in this country. This crime is grossly underreported and often times invisible because so much of it occurs after the public's eye and view. And the Greater Boston area estimated that hundreds of women, if not more, are reported to be victimized each year. We at the Boston Police Department continue to work tirelessly with our law enforcement partners at the state and federal levels to disrupt human trafficking organizations. We recognize the significance of training and front-line personnel in education and human services to identify those potential victims. We also acknowledge that law enforcement must shift attention from criminalizing the actions of this victims and commit to eradicating the demand with aggressive police action. And it's through these partnerships and teamwork of all the agencies involved in today, that together we will hold people accountable and treat those who have been victimized with respect while assisting in their long term recovery. And it's about exit recovery. It's about what do we do after we encounter these victims, and support them on their journey to another life.

Thank you very much for allowing me to be here today.

#### **AG Coakley**

It's now my pleasure to introduce my friend and my colleague Audrey Morrissey from My Life My Choice. I have learned probably more about this issue from Audrey than anybody else. She has been a voice for victims, an important voice for victims and survivors. And so, welcome.

#### **Audrey Morrissey**

Good morning. I work for a program called My Life My Choice, which I am the associate director of, but I'm also a survivor of the commercial sex industry. I don't really want to talk a lot about that but I want to let you know about how meaningful this is for me to make a difference because I also come from the era where I was recruited at age 16 and didn't get out until I was 30. There were no services, the only way I could cope with what was going on, you know the abuse and all the things that I went through, was substance abuse. So because there were no services the only way I could deal with all that I was going through and to numb myself is I became a heroin addict, and it was only through substance abuse treatment that I came out of the life. When I look back at that I think about how that could have been avoided had there been services, had there been somewhere to go. You know, I came from the place of the old combat zone, and whatever you got you deserved. There was no protection for the children, the children were arrested, the purchasers were let go, we were abused by, at those times,

police officers, the Johns, the pimps, and that takes me into the domestic violence... the work that they had done and how we're all on board. And when I think of a woman who has suffered domestic violence at the hands of one person, I feel for that woman, but when I think of these victims who are being abused by the pimps, the purchasers, over, and over, and over again. I also think of the young women that I work with because I work with children who are under the age of 18, and what I see now, I've been in the field for 10 years and a lot of these girls have aged out of the system. They are always going to place a child in protective custody, but what I see happening now is that when a victim turns 18, now she's no longer a victim and then services are closed. So that same young woman who was 15 years old brought into life by a pimp and is still with that pimp at 18, I'm starting to hear now that's her choice and that makes absolutely no sense to me. There is nowhere for our adult women to go once they turn 18, and we need services, and there are lots of survivors, the importance of survivors coming to do this work and there are a lot of women who have struggled through who have made it out and who are willing to work to serve these victims. So this is something that we have to make happen, just like we have services for substance abuse, domestic violence, these victims need services as well. So thank you.

### **AG Coakley**

It's next my pleasure to introduce Julie Dahlstrom from Lutheran Social Services with a long history and career both herself and with Lutheran Social Services in attempting to address this problem. I should mention though that Julie has begun a program, for instance, at BU Law School where students can work in a clinic to represent victims of trafficking who have issues, as they often do, legal issues beyond those that are just immediately faced when they are trying to exit the life. We appreciate her contributions to this report and for being here today.

### **Julie Dahlstrom**

Thank you very much. So I first began my involvement in this issue about five years ago in part in happenstance. A young woman walked into my office and it turned out she was a victim of labor trafficking. She had worked for a family as a domestic worker for about five years with very little pay and very poor conditions. I was struck immediately by the lack of victim protections and support available to her in order to exit out of that situation and really establish a new life. Now many years later much has changed, fortunately, due to the extraordinary leadership of many of the people in this room, most notably the Attorney General Martha Coakley. There is now state legislation with new human trafficking crimes, greater criminal penalties, and increased victim protections. And today represents a very important new step forward for us. The report by the interagency task force brings attention to the extraordinary progress that we've made in the past five years, but also in the past year since the legislation has passed. And it calls us to action to ensure that further steps are taken to provide survivors with much needed supports that everyone here has spoken about, most notably Audrey. A very diverse group of people from agencies ranging from the Department of Children and Families, the Division of Licensure, My Life My Choice, The E.V.A. Center, and many others have come together to author and unanimously approve the most comprehensive task force report issued by these individuals in the nation. This report, as the Attorney General mentions, addresses current gaps in a number of areas including victim protection, training, awareness, demand, and data collection, all of which are equally

important, but in the victim services arena, as everyone has focused on, the report underscores the desperate need for housing, basic supports, and real viable alternatives for women in exiting out of exploitation. If we are going to say that they have a choice, we have to actually provide them with one. It calls attention to successful models, people in this room, like The E.V.A. Center and My Life My Choice, that are survivor or worker led, and that champion and give voice to the survivors who have courageously stepped out of the life and know intimately what it involves. This report is a very promising start. It provides a very comprehensive blueprint for the work yet to come. So today we are joining together as a moment of celebration for the work that's been done, but with an important call to action reminding us that our work as individuals, as a community, and as a Commonwealth is not yet done and, in fact, is perhaps just beginning. Thank you.

### **AG Coakley**

Thank you. And before I introduce our House Judiciary Chairman Eugene O'Flaherty, to whom we owe great thanks for his help in making sure we got this statute passed, I just wanted to give a big thank also to Senator Mark Montigny, who was frankly one of the first legislators to identify this problem, the extent of it, the need to address it in Massachusetts, and whose work on this issue really started us down the road to where we are today. His help also with this bill was extraordinary, but Mark was one of the first in our Legislature to say this is something we need to address so we appreciate that and we offer him thanks. It is now my pleasure to introduce Chairman O'Flaherty whose support of this bill, whose understanding of the importance of it, and his willingness to make sure it got passed at a time when there are a lot of priorities, urgent priorities for the Legislature. This is an issue that when Eugene saw how important it was that we do it and we do it soon, he made sure that it happened, and so we appreciate that.

### **Eugene O'Flaherty**

Thank you Madame Attorney General. I want to first state that when the Legislature passed this statute during that session that we had an extraordinary amount of matters in front of us, and were it not for the leadership of the Attorney General in continuously pointing out how important this legislation is, and was at the time, but is to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, this statute would not be in place today. She was a fierce advocate for many provisions contained in the statute and certainly had the vision and convinced those of us who were involved in the drafting of this statute to include the provision for which we are all here today, which is the interagency task force which I want to thank for the exceptional work that they have done in producing the report which I hope all of you will take the time to look at. It is a very comprehensive roadmap and blueprint for how we can move forward effectively with what is already a great statute. But the Attorney General and others had the vision to realize that often times when the Legislature passes a statute, and the entities and the individuals that are responsible for implementing it, discover in that process that there are a lot of practical concerns that need to be raised. This is the vehicle by which the Legislature and others in terms of funding issues, in terms of tweaking the statute, in terms of being there to make sure that practically, the individuals responsible for implementing this law have the ability to do so. At the end of the day, when the issue was first brought to me, I quite frankly didn't understand the issue and how big it was in Massachusetts.

I always thought of this issue as somewhere else or somebody else was dealing with it. But when the Attorney General and her staff and many others brought to me facts and statistics of just how prevalent this issue is, not only here in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts but its interaction with other states and the networks that are involved, it was a real eye opener for me. As one individual member of the Legislature, under the leadership of Speaker DeLeo, we made this a priority, and the Attorney General is the reason why all of us are here today and many families and individuals and victims have her to thank for this report and implementation of this statute in the Commonwealth. Thank you.

**AG Coakley**

I would just say that I think you've seen the enthusiasm of the folks with me on the podium but also that on a Monday in August that most of the task force members are here and committed to continue to work on this I think speaks to how important this mission is to us and to all of the agencies, the not for profits, the individuals. So I am hopeful that we will have success moving forward on this. So with that I just want to say thank you to the task force, to the subcommittees, and we can entertain questions.