

Communication from Public

Name: Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking
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Council File No: 23-1046
Comments for Public Posting: Submitted written comment addresses human trafficking large event myth and outlines Cast's recommendations.



September 23rd, 2024

The Honorable Board of Police Commissioners,
Public Safety Committee

Subject: Council File: 23-1046

Human Trafficking / National and International Events / Global Audience / Predators / Resources

The Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (Cast) is one of the nation's oldest and largest anti-trafficking service providers. We have provided comprehensive services to survivors of labor and sex trafficking in Los Angeles County for 25 years.

On January 31st, 2024 the Police Commission Board passed a motion entitled "Human Trafficking resources" that stated "human trafficking tends to increase when global events bring large audiences together". Cast submitted public comment on this issue on February 15th, 2024.

Current research is abundantly clear on debunking the causal relationship in question. There is no evidence to suggest that sex trafficking increases during large events like the Superbowl or Olympics.¹²³⁴

Cast's own client services data reflects this. In February of 2022, when the Superbowl was last held in Los Angeles, Cast served 20 survivors who were escaping their traffickers in our emergency response crisis program. In February of 2021, we served 21 survivors. There was no increase in survivors served by Cast during this large event.

There are some cases that suggest that large events with global audiences may increase rates of labor trafficking due to the need for short-notice construction and increased pressures on the hospitality industries.⁵

Sting operations that focus solely on the sex trade do nothing to support labor trafficking survivors or hold labor traffickers accountable. Furthermore, evidence shows that these operations do not prevent sex trafficking, rarely result in the

¹ (2011). WHAT'S THE COST OF A RUMOUR? A guide to sorting out the myths and the facts about sporting events and trafficking. *Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women*.

² Martin, L., Dr., & A. H., Dr. (2017). "Sex Trafficking and the 2018 Super Bowl in Minneapolis: A Research Brief". *University of Minnesota*.

³ L Martin and A Hill, 'Debunking the Myth of "Super Bowl Sex Trafficking": Media hype or evidenced-based coverage', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, issue 13, 2019, pp. 13-29, <https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.201219132>.

⁴ Deering, K., & Shannon, K. H. (2012). "Fears of an influx of sex workers to major sporting events are unfounded". *British Medical Journal Publishing Group*.

⁵ Timms, M. (2023, October 23). *U.S. Company Liable for Qatar World Cup Labor Exploitation, Lawsuit Alleges*. The Wall Street Journal. <https://www.wsj.com/business/u-s-company-liable-for-qatar-world-cup-labor-exploitation-lawsuit-alleges-344ab935>



prosecution of human traffickers, and often re-traumatize survivors.⁶ Arrest is not rescue or an ethical form of outreach and referral. The resulting criminal records survivors are regularly left with create insurmountable barriers to safe housing, employment, and immigration.

The types of operations that surround the Superbowl and other large events do not follow best practices outlined by relevant government agencies.⁷

The Office of Victims of Crime (OVC) and the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) fund the Enhanced Collaborative Task Force Model, which brings together law enforcement, prosecutors, and victim service organizations to address human trafficking regionally.

OVC and BJA have previously released a notice that law enforcement organizations who receive funding through the task force model are not permitted to use BJA funding to execute the following tactics:

1. Efforts that target the purchasers of commercial sex, colloquially known as “john stings”, fail to meet the requirements articulated in the authorizing statute if they do not involve the identification of one or more actual victims of human trafficking, prior to the operation or if they otherwise fail to involve a connection to one or more actual victims.
2. Stings that target individuals engaged in prostitution for arrest as a means for identifying victims of trafficking. Such efforts can compromise victim safety and recovery by failing to properly screen for sex trafficking victimization and resulting in the arrest of victims of sex trafficking, and by imposing requirements on victims to participate in services.

The Los Angeles Board of Supervisors passed a motion in October of 2023 entitled “Reimagining a Public Health Approach to Human Trafficking”.⁸ Supervisor Hilda Solis’ analysis of human trafficking efforts in Los Angeles County specifically addressed the Superbowl myth and stated:

*“Also looking forward, with two upcoming large-scale international sporting events in 2026 and 2028 the **persistent belief that large sporting events cause significant increases in sex trafficking will again become a topic of discussion and concern.** Indeed, in the lead up to the last Super Bowl in Los Angeles, law enforcement engaged in the planning and implementation of programs designed to combat the feared increase. **Contrary to this belief, however, the evidence appears to show that sex trafficking does not increase around large sporting events.** Moreover, human trafficking in the Los Angeles region is already a significant problem that continues notwithstanding any large-scale sporting events. Many antitrafficking advocates have*

⁶ (2020). Over-Policing Sex Trafficking. How U.S. Law Enforcement Should Reform Operations. *International Human Rights Clinic USC Gould School of Law*. <https://humanrightsclinic.usc.edu/2021/11/15/over-policing-sex-trafficking-how-u-s-law-enforcement-should-reform-operations/>

⁷ Freedom Network USA (2018, February 28). *Notice Clarifies Law Enforcement Use of Victim Assistance Funding*. <https://freedomnetworkusa.org/2018/02/28/notice-clarifies-law-enforcement-use-victim-assistance-funding/>

⁸ Solis, H. (2023). Reimagining Los Angeles County’s Approach to Human Trafficking. *Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors*.



*decried the focus on one-time events, rather than viewing trafficking as an ongoing issue that requires unmitigated focus and resources. The nature of the issue of human trafficking and these upcoming sporting events requires intentional scrutiny so that **resources, if needed, can be allocated based on evidence.***"

There is no question that human trafficking is an egregious human rights violation that impacts the most vulnerable people across every industry of Los Angeles. We strongly encourage the Commission Board to review the current research and discontinue investment in harmful operations based on myths. The County of Los Angeles has limited resources to address human trafficking so we must ensure that we engage in evidence based and trauma informed practices such as increasing funding for community-based organizations, survivor-led outreach, and emergency response hotlines such as the one run by Cast. Human trafficking is fueled by systemic inequity and will not be solved through arrest, but through meaningful investments in our communities.

Thank you.

Leigh LaChapelle

Leigh LaChapelle
Associate Director of Survivor Advocacy
Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking
Leigh@castla.org