

# FREEDOM NETWORK USA

The Freedom Network USA commends the U.S. State Department for the release of the 2016 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report. The continued prioritization of this annual report is just one example of the government's commitment to eradicating human trafficking, and this year's theme of prevention serves as an important reminder that our work must start before a person is victimized. We hope this ushers in a commitment from the US government to increasing protections for marginalized communities, expanding access to services and addressing economic instability. We join Ambassador Susan Coppedge in choosing to, "remain optimistic about the future – optimistic that the world is more interconnected and proactive in fighting human trafficking than ever before."

The Freedom Network USA, established in 2001, is a coalition 38 non-governmental organizations and individuals that provide services to, and advocate for the rights of, trafficking survivors in the United States. Our members include former prosecutors addressing sex and labor trafficking, civil attorneys bringing cutting-edge civil lawsuits, criminal attorneys filing petitions for victims who need their criminal records cleared, immigration attorneys who have brought immigration relief to hundreds, and social service providers who have assisted hundreds of survivors from every walk of life. Prior to the release of the TIP Report, Freedom Network USA submitted input on the state of anti-trafficking efforts in the United States, based on the experiences of our members. We commend the inclusion of a number of these recommendations in the report, showing the continued commitment to listen to those working directly with survivors.

We also note several important successes highlighted by the Report including:

- Enhanced government outreach to and engagement with survivors to improve training, programs, and policies on human trafficking
- Enactment of the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015, which eliminated an exception allowing imports into the US of goods produced with forced labor
- The elimination of the requirement that adult survivors cooperate with law enforcement in order to receive services from DOJ-funded programs

In contrast to these successes, the report also highlights the the continued failure of both Congress and the Administration to give labor trafficking adequate attention. Indeed, US Government efforts with respect to labor trafficking are an abject failure, a fact bluntly illustrated by the continued drop in prosecution of labor trafficking cases from 8% of DOJ prosecutions in 2014 to a dismal 2% of prosecutions in 2015. As we noted in our input, Congress has also demonstrated a singular focus on sex trafficking, to the exclusion of labor trafficking, evidenced by legislation such as the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act. Fifteen years after the TVPA became law, there continues to be no systematic effort to identify and address labor trafficking, and Administrative agencies continue to lack the knowledge and capacity to engage in effective outreach, education and investigation of the most egregious forms of labor violations.

In order to truly confront human trafficking within the US, we need to begin at its roots, and aggressively pursue the path of prevention laid out in the Report. We share in Ambassador Coppedge's optimism that with an enduring commitment from diverse stakeholders, led by the lived experiences of those trafficked and vulnerable to trafficking, we will be able to address this grave injustice.

*For more information on Freedom Network USA experience and input, see*  
<http://freedomnetworkusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/2016-FN-TIP-Comments-FINAL.pdf>

*Inquiries for this response should be directed to Freedom Network USA's Policy Co-Chairs*

**Kate D'Adamo**, [kdadamo@urbanjustice.org](mailto:kdadamo@urbanjustice.org)  
Policy Committee Co-Chair, Freedom Network

**Erin Albright**, [ErinAlbrightFN@gmail.com](mailto:ErinAlbrightFN@gmail.com)  
Policy Committee Co-Chair, Freedom Network