Proposal to Reorganize Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force into Houston Area Council on Human Trafficking (HAC-HT)

Logical Progression

The proposed Houston Area Council on Human Trafficking (HAC-HT) will graduate the City of Houston's Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force to a more expansive area council that forges strategic partnerships with city, state, federal, non-profit, faith-based, and education stakeholders. By adopting the 4 Ps, an established framework set forth by the United Nations and later modified by Hillary Clinton, HAC-HT will advance and deliver the City's official response in terms generally used in localities combating trafficking. The widely accepted 4P framework focuses on the following areas: 1) **Prevention** focuses efforts on public awareness and advocacy campaigns; 2) **Protection** efforts include the rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration of victims using a victim-centered approach; 3) **Prosecution** includes enforcing laws and allowing law enforcement to respond appropriately to trafficking; and 4) **Partnerships** advocate collaboration with the private and public sector, which will foster group diversity and effective communication.

Reasons to Transform

Houston's unique makeup makes it particularly susceptible to human trafficking. Its miles of coastline, ports, airports, proximity to the Mexican border, diverse communities, and network of highways leave Houston open to being exploited by traffickers. By reorganizing into HAC-HT, we will be able to address human trafficking at an enhanced capacity. Key benefits include:

1. HAC-HT seats include strategic partners not included on the current Task Force, such as the Port Authority.
2. Efficient translation of ideas by using the standard framework of the 4 Ps.
3. Use of new structure allows for efficient communication with other cities combating trafficking.
4. The Mexican border is a channel through which trafficking affects the rest of the nation. Our response can have a ripple effect on trafficking in the rest of the United States.
5. Streamline City of Houston efforts and coordinate with county, state, and federal efforts.

Proposed HAC-HT Objectives

1. Develop a 4 Ps action plan with measurable goals
2. Suggest public policy and legislative improvements
3. Build a comprehensive website in different languages
4. Create, if applicable, sister city partnerships
5. Map international, national, and local efforts to combat trafficking
6. Hold a city-wide summit

Logistics

There will be 40 available Council Seats, and each member will serve 2-year staggered terms. HAC-HT will be subdivided into standing sub-committees according to the 4Ps. Ad hoc committees will be formed as needed. Should the Mayor accept this suggested proposal, official invitations will be sent from the Mayor's Office.

Key Recommendations

Hire a staff person to represent the Mayor's Office. This person would be responsible for: 1) overseeing the implementation of HAC-HT's action plan commitments under the 4Ps; 2) coordinating the City's anti-human trafficking response; 3) performing legal analyses and formulating policy suggestions; 4) building bridges, where appropriate, with domestic and foreign governments combating trafficking; 5) coordinating HAC-HT and its sub-committee meetings; and 6) reporting on progress made to the Mayor and on an annual basis to the public.

It is also recommended that current Task Force members not offered a Council Seat have the chance to serve on a 4P sub-committee as a Committee Member rather than a Council Member.

Remember …

"For years, Maria was beaten and sold to men as a sex slave by her owner/pimp, working mainly out of a Houston cantina. 'He forced me to put on the clothes and showed me how to act,' said Maria as she vividly recalls her first time at the cantina. 'That night I was with 10 men.'"[1]

Samir, 44 from India, was promised work after Hurricane Ike in Houston. The company told him they would take care of all of his transportation, housing, and documentation. Samir left everything he had and came to Houston. When he arrived, he and 20 other men were forced to work 12 hours a day. They were not paid and were locked each night in a room together. When Samir stated he wanted to leave, he was told that the company paid for him to come to the U.S. and that he had to work to pay back his debt.[2]

Advisors

Houston City Council Member and the Human Trafficking Task Force Chair. Prepared by: Sub Committee Chair on Council Restructuring and three Sub-Committee Members (Legacy Health, Council Member Stephen Costello's Office, and Catholic Charities).

---

1   Ashley Honc, "Houston named a major hub for human sex trafficking," published on-line by UHCL: The Signal (February 11th, 2013): paragraphs 9-10, accessed October 28th, 2014, www.uhclthesignal.com/wordpress/2013/02/11/houston-named-a-major-hub-for-human-sex-trafficking/.

2   Information was provided by United Against Human Trafficking.

Thomson Reuters

Thomson Reuters is a leading provider of business information services. Our products include highly specialized information-enabled software and tools for legal, tax, accounting and compliance professionals combined with the world's most global news service – Reuters.

For more information on Thomson Reuters, visit **tr.com** and for the latest world news, **reuters.com**

Thomson Reuters Institute

The Thomson Reuters Institute brings together people from across the legal, corporate, tax & accounting and government communities to ignite conversation and debate, make sense of the latest events and trends and provide essential guidance on the opportunities and challenges facing their world today. As the dedicated thought leadership arm of Thomson Reuters, our content spans blog commentaries, industry-leading data sets, informed analyses, interviews with industry leaders, videos, podcasts and world-class events that deliver keen insight into a dynamic business landscape.

Visit **thomsonreuters.com/institute** for more details.