



STATE OF TEXAS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Every January, events take place across the country to shine a light on the scourge of human trafficking and challenge all to join the fight. The State of Texas takes part in these efforts by commemorating Human Trafficking Prevention Month and by strengthening our commitment to ending this atrocious crime.

We cannot stop what we do not see. Victims are often hiding in plain sight—held prisoner by fear, shame, and the trauma bonds created by their traffickers to manipulate and control them. That is why First Lady Cecilia Abbott helped launch a statewide *Can You See Me?* campaign in partnership with A21 and the Outdoor Advertising Association of Texas. Billboards depicting the most common forms of exploitation are being displayed in public spaces and transportation hubs across more than 70 Texas markets. The yearlong campaign will help the public recognize indicators of human trafficking and educate them on reporting suspicious activity. As community awareness of this crime continues to grow, our message to survivors resounds strongly: Texas sees you and we are here to help.

Traffickers are master manipulators who prey upon vulnerabilities and often trick victims into situations that feel impossible to escape from. In fact, such tactics may result in situations where victims appear complicit in their own exploitation or even guilty of criminal behavior. I commend our law enforcement officers and prosecutors who bring the full force of the law against traffickers, and I encourage them to continue to look beneath the surface to ensure that survivors are not punished for the sins of their traffickers. I also applaud our state legislators, not only for the significant financial investments made during the 86th Legislative Session to address this crime, but for their successful efforts to provide survivors with streamlined access to a clean criminal record and a fresh start.

The cruel realities of human trafficking may seem dark and insurmountable, but hope is on the horizon. Trafficking enterprises are being dismantled in Texas, and more survivors of child sex trafficking are being identified and connected to trauma-informed services and support than ever before. The Child Sex Trafficking Team in my Public Safety Office is actively engaged in strategies to address the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Texas. Through collaborative efforts, progress is being made toward preventing victimization before it occurs, identifying and recovering victims, providing coordinated services to help survivors heal and thrive, and bringing justice to hold exploiters accountable.

At this time, I encourage every Texan to join the fight against human trafficking in whatever way they can: be the one to educate a friend; be the one to mentor a child; be the one a survivor can trust; be the one to hold business partners accountable; be the one to recognize the signs; be the one to report suspicious activity. We can—and we must—address the factors that make such exploitation possible in the first place. With every Texan doing their part, we can end this heinous crime, and Texas can be the one to lead the way.

Therefore, I, Greg Abbott, Governor of Texas, do hereby proclaim January 2020, to be

Human Trafficking Prevention Month



in Texas, and urge the appropriate recognition whereof.

In official recognition whereof,
I hereby affix my signature this the
3rd day of January, 2020.

A handwritten signature of Greg Abbott in black ink.

Governor of Texas