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**Shapiro Administration, Workgroup Take Steps to Combat Human Trafficking**  
*Interagency workgroup convenes panel on human trafficking*

**Harrisburg, PA** – The Pennsylvania Interagency Human Trafficking Workgroup today held a human trafficking advocacy day and panel at the state capitol building. Workgroup members were joined by survivors, elected officials, advocates, and law enforcement to discuss issues currently faced in the battle against human trafficking.

Following the start of an informational session that included tables and displays hosted by partner organizations, the interagency group was joined by survivors and advocates to hear first-hand accounts of their stories and learn about the various ways we can improve our systems to better support healing. Speakers included Attorney General Michelle Henry, Project Protect Survivor Mentor Liz Stein, and Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission Director of Policy Ashley Walkowiak.

The panel, composed of Emmy Award-winning Documentarian and Advocate Ruchira Gupta, Chief Deputy Attorney General Heather Castellino, Founder of Character: Be about It (CBAI) Matt Harris, Captain James Savage and survivor members of Project Protect's Youth Advisory Committee discussed the current challenges in combatting human trafficking. The panel was hosted by Child Advocate and Executive Director of the PA Office of Advocacy & Reform Dr. Maryann McEvoy.

"Expanding the alliance committed to fighting human trafficking in Pennsylvania uncovers more of these devastating crimes and strengthens the network of care for victims. After all, brave survivors who come forward and tell their stories help others from becoming victims and enable law enforcement to prosecute predators," **said Pennsylvania Attorney General Michelle Henry**. "This event, along with my office's recently-launched Human Trafficking Section, show there is much strength in numbers, and we look forward to continuing this fight with local, state, and federal partners."

The Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General Human Trafficking Section, led by Chief Deputy Attorney General Heather Castellino, takes a multi-disciplinary approach to addressing these crimes. These cases often cross jurisdictional lines, so state and federal agencies must play enhanced roles in investigations and prosecutions. The section also seeks to continue education and outreach efforts on the topic, with an emphasis on helping individuals recognize signs of sex trafficking as they occur and implementing best practices to address the situation.

"The shadow of human trafficking is ever present on American roadways," **said PennDOT Secretary Mike Carroll**. "We're proud to work with partners across the state to improve safety for travelers, and we implore Pennsylvanians to learn and share the signs of human trafficking."

In 2023, PennDOT updated its [End Human Trafficking course](#) for all employees of the department. This course provides awareness on the subject of Human Trafficking and the

various campaigns ran by organizations such as "Truckers Against Trafficking" and information on PA protection laws such as, Act 105, Act 130, Act 131 and Act 1.

"Working together to understand the vulnerabilities in our communities and systems and building trauma-informed supports for survivors is the way forward," **said PA Human Relations Commission Director of Policy Ashley Walkowiak**, who spoke today on behalf of her late sister, a trafficking victim from Cumberland County.

The Human Trafficking Interagency Workgroup consists of roughly two dozen sibling agencies and advocacy groups working together to coordinate human trafficking prevention and awareness efforts across the state. The group meets bimonthly to share resources, discuss best practices, and organize human trafficking prevention efforts.

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