

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS JANICE HAHN AND
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Providing Outreach to Workers in the Massage Industry

Human trafficking is a serious crime and a grave violation of human rights, in which people use force, fraud, or coercion to compel others into forced labor, including forced commercial sexual activity. It is a hidden crime as victims rarely come forward to seek help because of language and cultural barriers, fear of the traffickers and/or other authorities, shame, and physical or psychological isolation.

While estimates on the number of human trafficking victims in the United States, California, and Los Angeles County do not exist, the National Human Trafficking hotline reported that it received 1,011 calls about suspected labor and sex trafficking cases in the illicit massage, health, and beauty sector—the most tips the hotline received about any industry aside from concerns about sex trafficking in the escort industry. Here in LA County, calls from survivors to the local human trafficking hotline, run by the Coalition Against Slavery and Trafficking (CAST), increased by 15%. In total, 44% of calls CAST received were for labor trafficking, 51% for sex trafficking, and 5% for both.

Based on CAST’s observation of human trafficking cases stemming from the massage parlor industry during the last 2 years, survivors have been willing to connect to

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services and cooperate with law enforcement when they are empowered with knowledge about their rights. This is particularly true when information is delivered to survivors and other workers in a trauma-informed, linguistically and culturally appropriate manner. While regulation of massage establishments in unincorporated Los Angeles County can enhance legitimacy of business operations and support health and safety; a complementary program addressing the needs of massage establishment workers—particularly non-English speaking, low wage, immigrant workers—is also critically needed.

WE, THEREFORE MOVE that the Board of Supervisors instruct the Director of Public Health, in collaboration with the Director of Consumer and Business Affairs, Office of Immigrant Affairs, the Acting Director of Workforce Development, Aging, and Community Services, and community partners to report back in 60 days on a strategy to provide culturally and linguistically sensitive, targeted outreach, education, and linkage to services for workers in the massage industry.

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