



**PUBLIC REQUEST TO ADDRESS  
THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA**

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

HILDA L. SOLIS  
HOLLY J. MITCHELL  
LINDSEY P. HORVATH  
JANICE HAHN  
KATHRYN BARGER

**Correspondence Received**

The following individuals submitted comments on agenda item:				
Agenda #	Relate To	Position	Name	Comments
19.		Favor	DEBORAH K MANNIS	The Virtuous Woman Inc supports and is in Favor of Supervisor Holly Mitchell to protect and prevent individuals who have been or could experience economic impacts from any disasters present and in the unforeseen future. I believe that there should be a relief plan in place so that people that are affected by disasters have a safe space and place available to them that will ensure that their needs are meant during loss and transition from their normal living conditions. The County will need to work with other agencies already working with Human Sex Trafficking for these individuals to have more resources. There are so many forms of Human Trafficking, and this Motion will allow the County of Angeles to get a head of the problem now and moving forward. The Virtuous Woman Inc has worked with Victims for over 19 years, along with a working collaboration with Supervisor Mitchell for over 13 years and she understands there are never enough resources for these individuals, Drop-in and Recovery Centers are needed and can assist with changing the lives of exploded and individuals that have already experienced this horrible lifestyle. Please approve this motion.
			Melody Taylor Stark	
			Paloma Bustos	
		<b>Item Total</b>	<b>3</b>	
<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>3</b>	



**Loyola Law School**  
Loyola Marymount University  
Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative



March 31, 2025

Los Angeles Board of Supervisors  
Kenneth Hall Administration  
500 W. Temple St, Room 381B  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**Reference: Motion by Supervisors Holly J. Mitchell  
Preventing Human Trafficking in the Wake of Natural Disasters**

**Dear Esteemed Members of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors,**

On behalf of the Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative, I am writing to express our strong support for Supervisor Mitchell's proposed motion to prevent human trafficking in the wake of natural disasters.

As Los Angeles County continues to confront the devastating consequences of the recent wildfires, the risk of human trafficking must be addressed as a matter of public safety and equity. Disasters do not affect everyone equally. Marginalized communities, especially those facing poverty, displacement, or immigration-related barriers, are often left with few options and become prime targets for exploitation.

A 2021 *New Yorker* article, **The Migrant Workers Who Follow Climate Disasters**,<sup>1</sup> illustrates how more frequent and intense natural disasters have created a growing market for cheap, unprotected labor. Thousands of workers are pulled into cleanup and rebuilding jobs with little to no safety or rights. Many experience wage theft, threats, and dangerous conditions. Some are even transported across states from one disaster to another and then left with nothing once the work is done. The lack of vetting for subcontractors only adds to this exploitation, enabling large corporations to benefit from this labor while avoiding responsibility for the abuse that occurs further down the supply chain.

This isn't just happening elsewhere. It's a real and growing risk here in LA County. As the motion points out, past disasters like Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Harvey show how traffickers take advantage of unregulated recovery efforts. Without proper oversight, rebuilding can lead to a second crisis, one where vulnerable people are exploited instead of protected.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/11/08/the-migrant-workers-who-follow-climate-disasters>



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In early 2025, following the devastating fires in the Pacific Palisades, Melissa was recruited for a smoke and ash cleanup job through an informal network of workers. She was picked up from a street corner where hundreds of workers waited for vans that promised work in the burned areas. She got in one of those vans and was taken to a damaged home in Brentwood, where she was ordered to clean hazardous fire retardant and ash without any protective equipment, training, or clear information about her pay.

Like many others on the crew, largely undocumented immigrants, Melissa was exposed to dangerous conditions that left her with ongoing health issues. Despite promises of pay, many workers never received their wages, and fear of retaliation or immigration enforcement kept them from speaking out. She has since filed a complaint with the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA).

We strongly support the motion's focus on public awareness, training, and concrete measures to ensure County contractors are not involved in trafficking. To deepen the impact of these efforts, the county should adopt a public health approach focusing on prevention, early intervention, and support for impacted communities. Addressing trafficking isn't just about enforcement, it's about reducing risks before harm happens.

This is an urgent step toward protecting our most vulnerable residents. We strongly urge the Board to approve it.

Sincerely,

*Paloma Bustos*

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Paloma Bustos, MSW

Policy Associate

[Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative](#)

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