

Human Trafficking Training Requirements for DFPS Caregivers  
DFPS Sunset Commission Public Testimony  
Prepared by Jenna Cooper, MSW and Dixie Hairston, LMSW

My name is Dixie Hairston and I am a licensed master of social work with expertise in child trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Members of the Texas Sunset Commission, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am encouraged by the recommendations in the Sunset Commission's staff report and while each issue is vitally important I would like to speak particularly on the issues of children in foster care who are vulnerable to becoming victims of human trafficking.

Unfortunately, Texas has become a "hub" for human trafficking activity. A statewide study conducted in 2010, documented 740 cases of adolescent girls being marketed for commercial sexual activities across Texas during a 30-day period.<sup>1</sup> This same study also found that 188 adolescent girls are sexually exploited for commercial purposes in Texas on ANY given weekend.<sup>2</sup>

Children who have a history of abuse or those within the child protective services system, particularly those in foster care, are especially vulnerable to human trafficking. According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, *60 percent of likely child trafficking victims reported missing were either in foster care or a group home setting prior to being trafficked.*<sup>3</sup> With no way to survive on their own, they are lured into a life of being trafficked for sex.

We applaud the state's effort and leadership in this area thus far. Particularly, the development of a human trafficking awareness training curriculum developed by the State's Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force. However, further action is needed to ensure the implementation of this training curriculum so that DFPS employees become increasingly prepared to work with and protect this vulnerable population.

I ask the Commission and DFPS administration to please consider the following:

- **Enhance training requirements for ALL DFPS caregivers to include the state-developed human trafficking awareness curriculum that includes *specific* information on the youth they supervise.**
- **Require ALL DFPS employees to complete the state-developed human trafficking training as a part of basic skills development training.**

If implemented, these recommendations will allow DFPS to better identify, prevent and protect youth in the foster care system from being vulnerable to human trafficking through continuous support and innovative, effective training.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony today.

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<sup>1</sup> Children at Risk. *The Texas Safe House Movement: An Examination of Restorative Shelter Core Components and Recommendations.* (2012).

<sup>2</sup> Children at Risk. *The Texas Safe House Movement: An Examination of Restorative Shelter Core Components and Recommendations.* (2012).

<sup>3</sup> National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. <http://blog.missingkids.com/post/56795201973/the-national-center-for-missing-exploited>