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Home > News and Updates > Press Releases > 2016 > Governor, AG, Mayor Announce Anti-Human Trafficking

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Governor Baker, AG Healey, Mayor Walsh Announce Anti-Human Trafficking Policies

New Trafficking Prevention Policies Explicitly Bar Employees and Contractors from Involvement in Sex Trafficking or Forced Labor

BOSTON – Governor Charlie Baker, Attorney General Maura Healey, and Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh today announced new policies to explicitly prohibit employees and contractors from perpetuating human trafficking, including commercial sex trafficking and forced labor.

“Trafficking human beings for sex and labor is a growing problem in Massachusetts and has existed underground for far too long,” said AG Healey. “As large employers in this state, we are making clear that we have no tolerance for this kind of exploitation. I thank Governor Baker and Mayor Walsh for their leadership and for bringing this issue to the forefront. We hope other agencies and businesses will take similar measures to fight this problem.”

The AG’s Office has charged 25 individuals in connection with human trafficking since 2012 and [earlier this month announced](#) the indictment of five individuals in three separate trafficking schemes to exploit vulnerable women.

“We must aggressively target the drivers of human trafficking to ensure this horrific practice is eliminated in the Commonwealth and our society as whole,” said Governor Baker. “I am pleased to announce our administration’s commitment to enforce a zero tolerance policy for our employees regarding human trafficking and we remain committed to enacting strict reforms to target the sources of human trafficking. I thank Mayor Walsh and Attorney General Healey for their partnership on this critical issue.”

Governor Baker issued an executive order to reinforce a zero tolerance policy for all Executive branch employees regarding human trafficking and related activities. In addition to establishing a statewide policy, all Executive Branch agencies will be directed to exercise their best efforts to include principles of zero tolerance for human trafficking and related activities in future collective bargaining agreements.

“I’m pleased the Commonwealth is taking steps to ensure state and federal laws and regulations are firmly enforced to stop human trafficking and forced labor,” said Lt. Governor Polito. “As chair of the Governor’s Council on Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence, our team will continue to collaborate on more ways to out this underground issue from our state and keep our communities safe.”

“These new policies will raise awareness and show that Boston has no tolerance for those involved in the human trafficking crisis,” said Mayor Walsh. “I thank the Attorney General and Governor for their shared commitment to create safe communities and end these heinous crimes.”

In addition to the City of Boston, the Boston Public Schools has also announced anti-human trafficking policies for employees and contractors.

Under Mayor Walsh’s leadership, the City of Boston, including Boston Public Schools, is also working collaboratively with the AG’s Office, city officials, organizations and Demand Abolition’s CEASE Network to reduce the demand of sex purchasing through aggressively pursuing buyers and providing support services for victims.

Recognizing that buyers are the catalyst for all sex trafficking, these new policies explicitly prohibit those who work for or do business with government from engaging in any activities related to sex-buying, creating a zero tolerance policy for employees soliciting and buying sex, regardless of the arrest of or criminal action taken against an employee.

“People who choose to purchase sex are helping perpetuate a system of violence and abuse that’s gone on for too long. We applaud Governor Baker, Attorney General Healey and Mayor Walsh for their leadership,” said Ziba Cranmer, Executive Director of Demand Abolition, a program working to eradicate sex trafficking by focusing on the demand for paid sex. “I hope more public and private sector employers follow this lead in taking proactive measures to prevent sex trafficking.”

According to research done by Demand Abolition, which used accounts from survivors, law enforcement, and online search data, sex buyers often look for purchasing opportunities during business hours or while on company equipment.

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In Boston it's estimated that more than 10,000 ads selling people for sex are posted online every month, with each ad receiving an average of 46 responses, according to research by Demand Abolition. This indicates that there is a strong demand for paid sex in the area—demand that is fueling the local trafficking economy.

The National Human Trafficking Resource Center's hotline has seen a 259 percent increase in calls reporting trafficking cases in America over the past five years, while a federal report estimates the underground commercial sex economy in just eight American cities is worth up to \$1 billion.

"We are talking about the most vulnerable individuals in our communities being preyed upon by a multibillion dollar industry," said Lisa Goldblatt Grace, Co-Founder & Director at My Life My Choice. "Among the girls we serve at My Life My Choice, the most frequent age of entry into the sex industry is 14—middle school age. Eighty percent of these children are involved with our child welfare system. I am grateful that our civic leaders are taking these powerful steps to say that the Commonwealth will not turn a blind eye from this egregious form of abuse."

"Victim advocates in Massachusetts are working daily to support survivors of commercial sex trafficking. It is essential that we as a community do more than respond to the impact of this horrific crime and take efforts to disrupt the business model that leads to so many victims and survivors," said Liam Lowney, Executive Director for the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance. "Whether for sex or labor, trafficking people is profitable because there is a demand for these services in the Commonwealth. Zero tolerance policies can be an effective strategy to ensure that any employee purchasing others for a price will be held accountable. I am grateful to Governor Baker, AG Healey, and Mayor Walsh for their efforts to dismantle this enterprise and seek a day with fewer victims."

These policies also prohibit involvement in or use of forced labor, including withholding an employee's identification or documents, or using recruiters who do not comply with the laws. According to the most recent estimates from the International Labour Organization, nearly 21 million people are victims of forced labor globally and \$150 billion in illegal profits are generated through forced labor every year.

"Vulnerable workers have been subject to labor exploitation and trafficking across the Commonwealth," said Julie Dahlstrom, Clinical Instructor at the Boston University School of Law Human Trafficking Clinic. "The Massachusetts human trafficking law passed in 2011 was a sea change in Massachusetts by criminalizing forced services, but these policies mark another monumental step forward. They send a send a clear, powerful message that forced services and labor trafficking will not be tolerated and that perpetrators cannot operate with impunity."

Following the advocacy for and passage of the Commonwealth's first human trafficking law in 2011, the Attorney General's Office formed a Human Trafficking Division within the office. AG Healey has made the support of survivors and prosecution of traffickers a priority of her office and the Division has taken a collaborative approach to addressing the issue through investigations, prosecutions, victim services and policy initiatives.

The Governor's policy can be found [here](#).

The Attorney General's policy can be found [here](#) 

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