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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

AG Moody Encourages Vigilance in Protecting HT Victims

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody is reminding the public that human trafficking continues to plague the state and the country despite the health risks of COVID-19. We must stay vigilant in reporting human trafficking and victims should know that resources are still available.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “Human traffickers aren’t stopping despite the health threats from COVID-19—and neither will we cease our efforts to stop them. It is abhorrent that unscrupulous individuals would take advantage of the pandemic and try to lure people through the use of force, fraud or coercion for nefarious purposes when so many find themselves on hard times. We need to continue to be vigilant in our fight to combat human trafficking. Know the signs of human trafficking, and if you see something, say something.

“The National Human Trafficking Hotline remains fully operational. If you suspect human trafficking, or if you are a victim yourself, there are resources available and by calling Polaris at 1(888) 373-7888, the hotline can help finding safe ways to escape abusers and shelter in place.”

While there has been a decrease in certain types of reported crime in some areas, the type of circumstances that human traffickers look for to prey on others may be increasing. Just last month, Attorney General Moody announced the arrest of a Florida attorney on human trafficking charges.

Human traffickers often rely on manipulating and exploiting a person’s vulnerabilities. Polaris’ National Human Trafficking Hotline has reported new disturbing trends emerging in the face of the pandemic with traffickers finding new ways to exploit people in vulnerable positions. An example being landlords pressuring renters to trade labor or sex in return for not being evicted. Polaris also reports that traffickers may be acting more violent to victims amid social distancing orders.

This means now, more than ever, communities need to come together to protect those who may be vulnerable.

While many businesses remain closed or are operating with fewer staff, there are still resources available to help human trafficking victims. Report suspected human trafficking by calling the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1(888) 373-7888.

Attorney General Moody encourages everyone to learn how to spot human trafficking. Individuals displaying signs of human trafficking may:

- Have physical injuries, such as burns, branding, disorientation, scars, tattoos, etc.;
- Display fear, anxiousness, paranoia or a reluctancy to discuss injuries;
- Appear not to be free to leave or move on their own;
- Speak as if coached or having someone else speak for them; and
- Suffer from drug addiction, infections or sleep deprivation.

To read the latest message from Polaris, the operator of the National Human Trafficking Hotline, click here.

For renters to know, Governor DeSantis issued Executive Order 20-94 which suspended and tolls any statute providing for an eviction cause of action under Florida law solely as it relates to non-payment of rent by residential tenants.

Attorney General Moody recently sent a letter to the Federal Housing Finance Administration and the Department of Housing and Urban Development to seek help for homeowners affected by COVID-19. See more here.

Learn how to spot and report human trafficking by visiting YouCanStopHT.com.